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ABSTRACT

This booklet touches upon many aspects of the Maasai tribe of Tanzania and Kenya. Topics covered include an historical background examining Maasai origins and contact with Europeans and a survey of their economic system detailing community life, daily routine, diet, the importance of and ideas about raising livestock, food, technology, and inheritance customs. The chapter on social structure describes the Maasai custom of male dominance, male and female circumcision ceremonies, the life of the warrior including warrior taboos, and becoming an elder. Male-female relationships are explored, covering courtship, marriage, extra-marital relationships, and Maasai customs during pregnancy, childbirth, infancy, and childhood. The author defines social controls and surveys how the Maasai deal with the unknown, discussing medicine men, treatment of illness and injury, death, creation stories, superstitions, and proverbs. He describes the towns, as opposed to the villages, and summarizes by noting trends and possibilities in the future. He concludes the booklet by noting some of his own personal experiences while visiting the Maasai. (CK)

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THE PROUD MAASAI

D. LEE ROPER

Illustrated by
eva k. oemick

SO 011 692

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first trip to the land of the Maasai was during the summer of 1970. I returned in the winter and spring of 1977 while on sabbatical leave. These trips provided the opportunity for the experiences and research necessary to complete this book.

I'm deeply appreciative to the Maasai people for allowing me to roam at will through their villages taking notes and asking endless questions. My friends, Father Leffer and Peter Lembuya Ole Kapiani, were invaluable sources of information. They lived in both cultures and gave me the advantage of viewing the Maasai from both perspectives.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Virgil Seymour and my Aunt Irene. Virgil was my friend and teacher, and if I had not met him I would still be wiping hams in a packing plant in East St. Louis. My Aunt Irene who had a way of being as young as I was, made being poor seem like an advantage. I regret they both died before I matured enough to have the courage to tell them I loved them.

My thanks to Sarah Stroyan for proofreading and making necessary corrections, and Gayle Harper for typing the manuscript. The book is dedicated to Barb, Cindy, and Chris.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Maasai Origins

The Maasai are an East African semi-nomadic tribe composed of four large clans and about twenty major sub-clans. Census estimates vary somewhat, but their present population is probably about 125,000. The Maasai live primarily in the southern part of Kenya, and the northern part of Tanzania. There are a number of other tribes found throughout most of East Africa whose way of life differs only in minor ways from that of the Maasai. The cultural similarities with the Karamojong, Samburu, Turkana and Mandi are most obvious; but other tribes like the Arusha are also very similar even though they are not nomadic, and are more dependent on farming than herding.

The parallels in the cultures of the different tribes are due primarily to the dominant influence of the Maasai in East Africa during the past few centuries. As they invaded this area in their southern migration they usually either killed the indigenous population or quickly assimilated them through intermarriage into the Maasai way of life. The polygynous Maasai males found the women of these other tribes a source of additional wives. However they were selective and the women of some tribes, like the Luo, were not taken as wives because the women were not circumcised. Beyond these few exceptions there was very little discrimination against the tribes they conquered and eventually assimiliated. It is the unique combination of these attitudes and activities that resulted in the spread of the Maasai culture throughout so much of East Africa.

The Maasai have little knowledge of when or why they migrated into East Africa, or for that matter, where they started their migration. The Asians and Europeans, who are even more recent immigrants into East Africa, have researched Maasai origins, but have provided little additional information beyond speculation. The existing evidence seems to indicate that the Maasai immigrated into East Africa about three to five centuries ago from an area around the Sudan border near Lake Turkana (formerly Lake Rudolph). There are still tribes in that area like the Dinkas and the Dorobo who are similar in culture as well as physical appearance. The Maasai are a mixture of a Negroid sub-stock called Nilotes, and the Cushites who represent a Mediterranean sub-stock of the Caucasoid race. The strongest influence, both racial and linguistic, has been, Nilotic. There is some dispute as to whether they derived the name Maasai from the "Maa" language they speak or from the word masa which refers to wealth measured in livestock.

C

Contact with Europeans

In evaluating the impact of white culture on the African interior it seems difficult to believe that the Europeans have made most of their cultural influence within the last century. Cities like Nairobi, Moshi, and Kampala are as modern as most any American city. At least ten centuries before they invaded the interior of East Africa the Asians and Portuguese, and later the Europeans, established trading communities all along the African coast on the Indian Ocean. They avoided penetrating the interior

for a variety of reasons. Until recent history there was very little demand for what that area had to offer, and that limited demand was being met by the natives themselves who had easy access into the interior. They were discouraged by the rough terrain, dry climate, game animals, and hostile natives like the Maasai. A few white explorers like Joseph Thomson and Sir Richard Burton ignored the obstacles but returned with such horror stories about the Maasai that it delayed further exploration into the interior.

Some Maasai were captured and brought to the coast as slaves. That popular business venture proved to be a poor investment. Their women apparently adjusted reasonably well because it involved a subservience they were accustomed to accepting. However, the pride, independence, and hostility of the males quickly excluded that area of Africa as a profitable source for slaves.

Maasai resistance to the invasion of the whites sharply declined about a century ago. There was an accelerated effort on the part of the British to colonize the area. Even more important was a prediction made by their most prestigious medicine man, who told the Maasai people that they would be invaded by a people of chalk complexion with weapons too powerful to resist. He assured them, however, that the whites would remain in the area only a short period, and then leave forever. It is that part of the prediction which seems to have been the major factor that destroyed their traditional strong resistance to the Europeans they called L-Ojuju or hairy people.

The European conquerors were mostly British and German and they divided East Africa without any consideration of tribal boundary lines. Their original agreement was to divide East Africa by drawing a line on the map from the north to the south with the British taking the area to the east, including the coast. However, the Germans objected when they realized that the British got both of the mountains (Kenya and Kilimanjaro). Consequently, the boundary line was changed so it was drawn from east to west, and that is the way it is today. The British established the East African Protectorate (Kenya), and the Germans took Tanganyika (Tanzania). The boundary line is still a straight line on the map except for the "dog leg" course it takes around Mt. Kilimanjaro. It was once again established by the Europeans without giving any consideration to the traditional boundaries of the tribes living there. At the time that it was drawn up, the boundary line had little significance. It was simply a line drawn across the map, and

generally ignored by the colonialists as well as the natives. They were hardly even aware of one another's existence. The Europeans settled in the more fertile areas that most resembled their homeland, and seldom ventured beyond the few communities they had established. The natives that had been living in these areas were forced to move or become a source of cheap labor on the farms of the Europeans.

You might assume that when the blacks gained their independence from colonial domination they would change the national boundary lines to acknowledge the traditional tribal boundaries of their own people. That has not happened and there is little chance that it will. The boundary is as irrational today as it was at the time that it was established, but over the years it has become too entrenched to be easily altered. The issue is particularly sensitive with the Maasai since the national boundary line runs through the center of their territory, and about half of their people live on each side of the border. At the moment most of the Maasai still aren't aware of the boundary line and move freely back and forth across the border. However, that situation is likely to change as the governments of Kenya and Tanzania become increasingly nationalistic and competitive.

The Maasai survived a rinderpest epidemic in 1890 that destroyed most of their cattle. Two years later they had a smallpox epidemic that destroyed over half of their population. Since then they have continued to be plagued by these and other threats to their existence, including tribal rivalry. It is a terrible irony that after surviving so many destructive forces that their way of life could be seriously threatened by their independence from colonialism.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Maasai Communities:

Most of the Maasai people live in a small village they called an enkang. It is a circular structure enclosed within a thorn bush fence and usually contains somewhere between eight to forty dwellings. It is the residence of the married elders, their wives, and their children, and the center of most of their activities. The only Maasai not living in the enkang are the young circumcised males who have been initiated into the prestigious status of a Moran. The Moran are the Maasai warriors and they live in a separate village called a manyatta. It functions as a sort of a military barracks, although the architectural design looks very much like an enkang.

The Maasai are a semi-nomadic people with livestock as the basis of their economy. They live in a geographical area of limited rainfall which comes mostly during the Spring of the year. As a result they must necessarily be in constant search for new grazing areas. The Maasai have necessarily developed a way of caring for their livestock which requires only occasional changes in location. They graze their animals in every direction surrounding the enkang until their daily migrations to ungrazed areas are too distant to be practical. At that point they abandon their enkang and move to a new grazing area previously selected. They leave the enkang in good condition, because they may eventually return when the supply of grass and water has improved (unless they are forced to move because of cattle diseases like rinderpest or anthrax). In this instance they burn the enkang and abandon the area permanently. In either case when they arrive at the new site they construct small huts made of animal skins until they have the time and necessary building materials to construct an enkang.

The Maasai enkang covers a fairly large area since it must accommodate the livestock as well as the people. The village is a circular-shaped structure surrounded by a crude fence made mostly of thorn bushes, the only part of the village constructed by the men. The primary purpose of the fence is to protect people and the livestock from predatory animals as well as cattle rustlers from other tribes. The fence isn't all that effective but it seems to be the best defense they are able to construct considering the

limited raw materials available. Much of the problem of providing adequate protection for their livestock is the result of their custom of each family in the enkang having its own entrance rather than just one entrance which would be easier to defend. The livestock are kept in the center of the enkang for maximum safety; they are herded into the compound at dusk and remain there until dawn when Maasai boys drive them out into the surrounding area to spend the day grazing.

The dwellings of the people are usually located on the perimeter of the enkang near the thorn fence. They are small and somewhat inconvenient considering their function. They are usually about eighteen feet long, ten feet wide, and seldom more than five feet high. This limited space is the living quarters for the parents, their uncircumcised children, and frequently a parent or some other relative of the elder. It must also accommodate their possessions, unweaned livestock, and any guests that may visit. Their homes encourage a pleasant intimacy in social relationships which is seldom found in our society that emphasizes privacy to the point of isolation.

Maasai wives have the responsibility of building and maintaining their dwellings. They are usually assisted by their uncircumcized daughters who are too small to do much of the work, and accompany their mothers primarily to learn the skills they will need when they marry. The wives begin by constructing a crude framework of tree branches around center posts taken from trees which don't attract termites. The tree branches are then interlaced with the longest sticks of wood available, and the remaining spaces are covered with grass. Once this basic framework is built they cover it over with a mixture of cow dung and mud. It is a vulnerable structure and requires continual repairs especially during the rainy season. As a preventive measure they frequently cover the top with animal hides when they know the rains are coming.

The interior of the dwelling is divided into two or three small compartments depending somewhat on the size and needs of the family. Immediately inside of the entrance is a small area where unweaned livestock are kept during the night to protect them from wild animals and prevent them from consuming too much of the heifer's milk. They often tend to become pets of the children and are sometimes allowed to roam throughout the entire dwelling. The next compartment is the largest and the center of most activities. It is there that the family assembles when not

sleeping and where guests are entertained. In the middle of the room is a small fire surrounded by a few rocks placed there to contain the fire and to keep the food they have cooked warm. Surprisingly enough, there is very little smoke in the dwelling even though the fire usually burns continually; it is kept at a hot ember level which gives maximum heat with a minimum of smoke. There is almost always a pot of tea being kept warm on one of the stones closest to the hot embers. The furnishings in the room are very simple. On both sides of the fireplace are flat, foot-high structures constructed of tree branch twigs, and covered with cowhide. They are used as a seat for entertaining guests during the day and as a bed at night. The elder and his sons sleep on one bed and his wife and daughters in the other. If there is a third compartment it is beyond this main room; it is usually very small and serves primarily as a combination storage area and bed for a visiting relative. Maasai dwellings have no windows so the interior is quite dark even during the day. A couple of small holes are usually made in the walls which allow a little light to penetrate and also permit some of the smoke from the fireplace to escape. Their dwellings are generally free of insects and rodents. They often use cow dung as fuel for the fire and that seems to act as a repellent against most of these kinds of pests.

If an elder has more than one wife, each lives in a separate dwelling with her children, and the elder alternates his time between them. The living arrangements are not based on any kind of a schedule; if he has a favorite wife and children he may spend more time with them. The dwelling of his first wife is located on the right of their family entrance to the enkang. The second wife builds her home on the left of the stockade entrance next to the first wife. If the elder has a third wife, she lives to the right of the first wife, and his fourth wife would reside to the left of the second wife. This alternating right and left pattern is followed for as many wives as an elder may have.

Daily Routine

Life in a Maasai enkang is very routine. Each day tends to be a carbon copy of the day before, and predictably the day after. The women are almost always the first to be up and moving about the village. They usually start the day a couple of hours before sunrise. After rekindling the dying fire they take the calves to the heifers for a limited feeding. The calves are then returned to a small kraal, or placed in the care of their youngest son to guard in order to prevent them from taking any more of the heifer's milk. The women usually begin milking the cattle about sunrise, and are assisted by their unmarried daughters. The first milk taken is tossed into the sky toward the rising sun. It represents an expression of appreciation to their god Enkai who gave the Maasai their cattle. The gourds of milk they collect are mostly consumed while still fresh, and what remains will serve as their midday meal. The women and their children drink the milk alone, because it is considered taboo for them to eat in the company of the men. The elders usually prefer to go outside for their morning meal, but if they should choose to remain in the dwelling, the wife and children must leave.

After this simple meal, the livestock are taken outside the village to graze and water. They are usually placed in care of one of the uncircumcised boys with occasional supervision by their fathers or older warrior brothers. The women and their daughters spend the rest of the morning cleaning their area of the village, and visiting with the other wives and their children. They usually sit in small clusters within one of their dwellings or gather outside of one of the family entrances to the village. They sit in

a swarm of flies talking with other wives while tanning hides, making jewelry and clothing, watching the young livestock in their charge, and caring for their infants.

The elders also gather in small groups, but separate from the women and children. They play their favorite game "en-geshei" which is most similar to the European game of Chinese Checkers. But mostly they seem to prefer just talking with other elders about their cattle, and selling or trading livestock. They frequently talk about the past and sometimes the future, but they mostly live in the present. They see no virtue in work, and consequently have delegated any necessary chores to their wives and children. They spend most of the day in conversation with their backs toward the warm rays of the sun.

In the early afternoon the rest of the morning milk is consumed; it has begun to sour, but they don't seem to find the taste at all objectionable. Most of the remainder of the day is spent like the morning. In the late afternoon the livestock are returned to the village to be milked by the women for the evening meal. As the sun sets, the air begins to chill so most of the women retreat to their dwellings and sit around the fire sharing a final cup of tea and conversation with their neighbors. The elders frequently spend the last moments of the evening with other elders around a communal fire close to their cattle.

The daily routine is sometimes changed by a visit to the nearest town, which changes their location but not their conversation or social relationships. The major event that changes the routine of life in an enkang is the occasional visit of their warrior sons. It is mostly an event enjoyed by the women who sing and dance along with the warriors. The elders seldom participate in the singing and dancing, but they do look forward to the warriors' visits and spend much of the time in lengthy conversation with them.

Their Diet

Almost everything in the Maasai economy is dependent in one way or another on their livestock, and particularly their cattle. Most of their possessions are either made from livestock parts, or intended to be used in some way in their care. This includes their diet which consists primarily of the milk and blood of cattle. The milk and blood are sometimes drunk separately, especially when fresh and taken directly from the animal. However they seem to prefer mixing the blood and milk together; the preparation is more involved and consequently not always feasible. If they drink just milk they sometimes mix it with a small amount of cattle urine which causes it to curdle into a soft cheese substance. The diet is so unique that many authoritites have speculated that it probably originated during a period of severe drought when there was little else available to eat. The Maasai also consume a lot of animal fat. They are a bit of a paradox to the medical profession because they don't have the health problems considered inevitable with a high cholesterol diet.

Maasai wives are responsible for milking the cattle placed in their care by their husbands. They do the milking in the morning and again in the early evening, and according to tradition, they must use a vegetable container as a receptacle for the milk. The vegetable gourds are the wives' most important domestic utensil. They aren't grown by the Maasai because they reject involvement in any kind of agricultural activities. They get the gourds in trade from nearby tribes like the Kikuyu and Arusha, who are primarily farmers. The gourds are usually decorated by the women with a variety of shells and beads. Courie shells always abound in all of their decorations because they consider them a sign of fertility. A short leather strap is attached to the side of the gourd to hold it securely when milking. They also make a leather cap which protects the contents and is sometimes used as a drinking cup for children. However, usually every Maasai, including any child that has been weaned, has his own gourd; they vary considerably in size depending on the appetite of the person. The gourds are usually prepared before milking to give the blood and milk mixture a smoked olive flavor. After cleaning the gourd with cattle urine, they take a handful of

twigs from an olive tree plant and place them in the fire until they start to burn. The burning twigs are pushed into the opening of the gourd and allowed to smoulder. The result is not only a taste they like, but an aroma that is characteristic of most everything associated with the Maasai.

The warriors and elders bleed the cattle. Like milk, the blood must be taken directly into a vegetable container which is usually a gourd. After selecting one of their cattle not recently bled, they tie a leather "belt-like" strap around the animal's neck. This serves as a tourniquet and causes the jugular vein to protrude. The puncture is made with a bow and arrow which is seldom used for any other purpose since projectile weapons are considered too cowardly to be used against an enemy. The arrow is held close to the vein to assure accuracy, but blocked with a piece of wood to prevent deep penetration. After taking about a pint of blood they pinch the wound closed with their fingers, and cover it over with a mixture of mud and cattle dung to heal it.

There are some changes being made in their diet but mostly in terms of how much they eat rather than what they eat. However, there is a greater emphasis on agricultural products like grains and fruit which they get in trade from nearby farming tribes. European influence on their eating habits has been minimal and limited mostly to drinking preferences, especially tea, coffee, and beer. There things must be purchased with European currency so the Maasai are developing at least a limited interest in acquiring shillings. Since they are reluctant to part with their cattle, shillings are not easily acquired, although a few have discovered one effortless method of making money. Traditionally they have objected to having their pictures taken. Today occasional small groups of Maasai warriors can be found standing along the sides of the roads traveled by tourist and will allow their pictures to be taken in exchange for a few shillings.

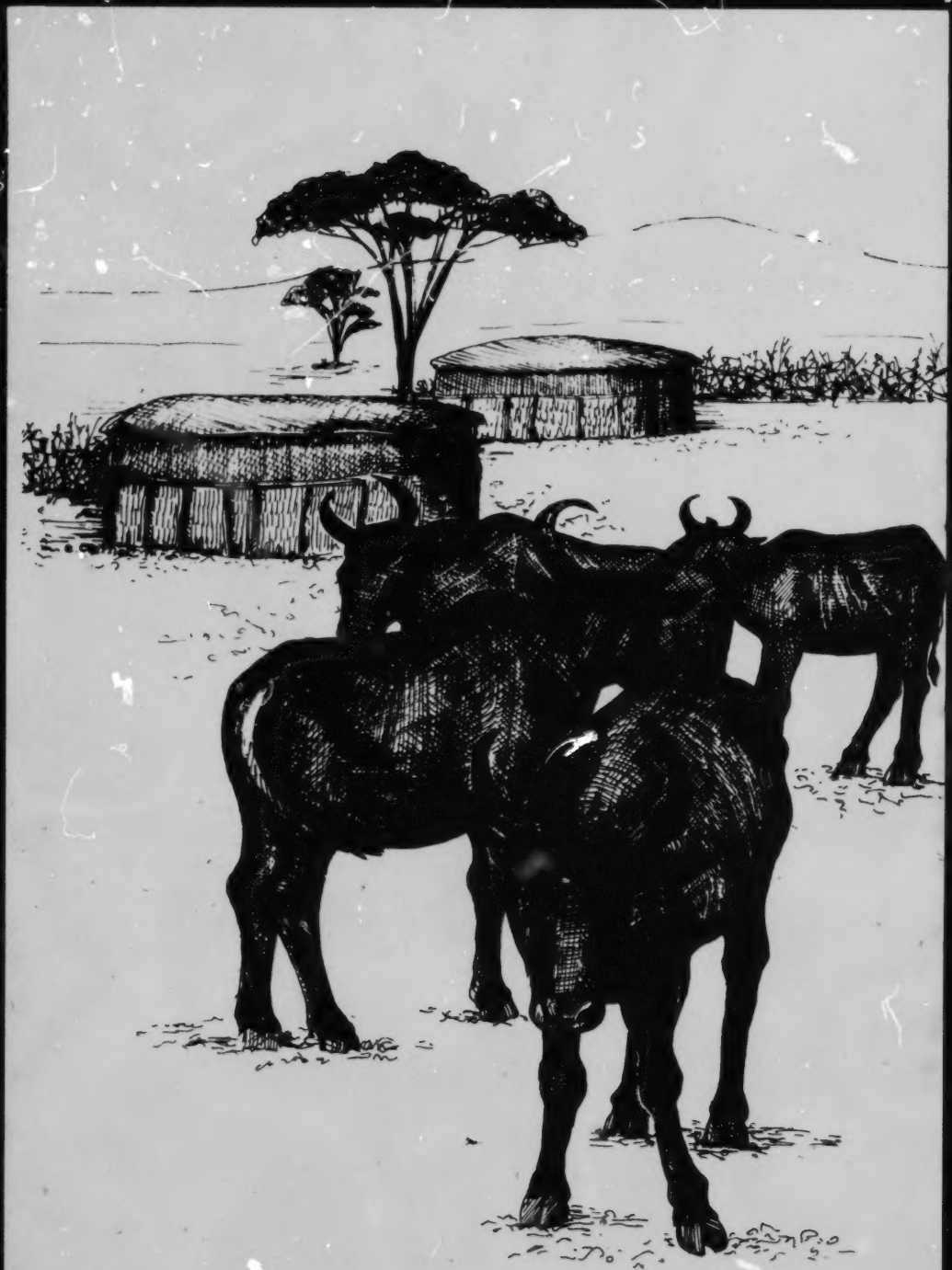
The other things in their diet are more traditional. They are very fond of honey, and it is also frequently used in trade or as a gift. In addition to eating the honey, they sometimes make it into a honey-wine which is a favorite drink of the elders. The honey is mixed with an equal amount of water in a gourd along with the dried fruit of what they call a sausage tree. The mixture is put in a warm place to ferment for a few days. It is a much stronger drink than the wines Europeans are accustomed to drinking. The Maasai do not eat any fish or fowl, and seldom eat vegetables. They almost never eat the wild animals in spite of their abundance and easy

availability. The infrequent exceptions are eland or buffalo, but usually only during periods of a severe food shortage. They consider these animals as wild cattle because of the close resemblance in appearance, and therefore an exception.

The Maasai are not hunters and relate condescendingly to all people that engage in any economic activity except herding. Their primary motive for killing wild animals is to protect their livestock. However, they do sometimes kill for sport, but it is rare and they don't have a reputation for poaching like many tribes in East Africa. Actually the Maasai have perhaps been the most effective and least expensive method found for controlling poaching. All of the East African governments have been very concerned with the poaching problems because it threatens the tourist industry which is their most important source of income. They have tried to patrol the area with game wardens, but the territory is so vast that it would be economically impossible to hire the necessary personnel to adequately protect the game animals.

The Maasai have provided an acceptable solution for a large part of Kenya and Tanzania. In their nomadic life they cover a lot of area and will usually kill any poacher who invades their territory. They don't share the government's concern with the preservation of wild animals, nor does the government endorse their unauthorized killing. However, the situation is to the advantage of the Maasai as well as the government so it is allowed to continue. The Maasai also kill game animals other than what they consider "wild cattle," but for reasons basic to their survival. They are only concerned with protecting their livestock. That sometimes involves killing even non-predators which they still consider a threat because they compete for the limited supply of grass and water. During periods of drought they sometimes place obstacles at water holes and allow access only to their own livestock. As a result, they condemn many wild animals to death.

Unlike poachers, the Maasai don't deliberately kill game animals for sale on the black market. They are aware that certain animal parts are of value and can be traded for cattle. Most valuable for trade are elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns; the ivory tusks are used mostly in making carvings for the tourists, and the horn of the rhinoceros is popular among Oriental societies as a aphrodisiac. They almost never hunt these animals, but they will sometimes remove the parts of value if they should find a dead animal.



The Maasai sometimes kill a few wild animals in order to obtain certain parts they use primarily for decoration. The most prestigious trophy is the mane of a lion. The prestige is in part due to the risk involved in killing the lion with their primitive weapons. The lion's mane is worn as a headdress or important ceremonial occasions. Ostrich feathers are much more common and frequently used in decorating a male's headdress. The hide of the buffalo is the preferred material for making the shields of the warriors. They almost never take the carcass of any of these animals; they leave the meat for the hyenas, vultures, and jackals.

Maasai Livestock

The livestock of the Maasai include cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys. The cattle though, are the most important to them in ways that go far beyond purely economic consideration. The importance of their cattle is even reflected in the way the elders frequently greet one another. They say, "I hope your cattle are well," which is their equivalent of our saying, "Hello."

Having a large herd of cattle is the ambition of every male, and marrying a man with many cattle is the dream of every girl. It is primarily a matter of the number of cattle that a man has that is important; the quality of the cattle is not vital. The one exception is diseased, lame or old cattle which they do recognize as being of somewhat less value. The only other quality consideration is reflected in their preference for animals of a solid color, especially black, and those without any kind of visible scars. In spite of their emphasis on the number of cattle, they never count them, or count anything else for that matter, because it is thought to be unlucky. Counting their cattle isn't really necessary because they are so familiar with every animal in the herd that they can tell immediately if one is missing even though their herd may number over a hundred animals. Those who are responsible for caring for the cattle probably spend more time with the animals than with other Maasai. Consequently they develop a close familiarity with the cattle and even giving personal names to each of them. The names usually reflect the place they were born or some unusual event associated with their birth.

This special relationship they have to their cattle even permeates their religious beliefs and teachings. They are taught from childhood that all of the cattle in the world belong to the Maasai people. They are told that their god Enkai who dwells in the sky brought the original cattle down from out of the sky and gave them exclusively to the Maasai people. This is why they feel perfectly justified to the point of feeling obligated, in raiding other tribes in East Africa and taking their livestock. From their point of view they are only taking back their own property. Cattle rustling still occurs with considerable frequency in spite of government opposition, and there is severe punishment of offenders. The punishment may involve imprisonment, a fine and/or strokes of a cane.

The size of the typical Maasai herd is about seventy cattle, eighty sheep as well as goats, and usually about fifteen donkeys. However, they are always looking for ways to increase the size of their herd since it reflects their wealth, social status, and the source of their livelihood. Efforts to increase the size of their herd has produced a number of serious problems. For one thing, they are producing more livestock than the supply of grass and water can support. Their cattle have somewhat adjusted to the harsh environment, and seem to be able to eat most anything and survive on a minimum of food and water. However, the animals are of poor quality which reduces the chances of being able to sell the meat or dairy products to outsiders. The Maasai are not very impressed with the concept of quality, and reject most programs on animal husbandry. This concern with numbers is further complicated by what in essence is a security problem. They are convinced that they need a surplus of livestock to protect them from the periodic livestock losses due to diseases, drought, or starvation. They reject the idea that increasing the size of their herds is the cause rather than the solution of their problem. A serious disaster occurred in the early 1960's that destroyed over a quarter of a million of their cattle through starvation and lack of water. Their reaction was to increase the size of their herds to protect them against such events. Part of the problem is also due to their rejection of the concept of individual ownership of land. Communal ownership seems to discourage individual responsibility in the care and conservation of land and water.

Many of the other Maasai livestock problems are also to a large extent self-inflicted. They tend to reject any professional advice or programs

on land and livestock management. In order to protect the livestock from wild animals and raiding tribes they confine them in very small areas. When the livestock are grazing on the open land outside of their villages the confinement results in quick depletion of the grass and water supply. An even more serious problem is created with the confinement of the animals during the night in their villages. The volume of livestock dung is allowed to accumulate far beyond what can be used in building or repairing their dwellings, or as fuel. This dung surplus when mixed with even a slight rain can produce a deep quagmire of mud and dung. The cattle are milked in this very unhygienic situation sometimes after the cow's udder has been dragged through the quagmire. The close confinement also contributes to the spread of contagious livestock diseases.

They store only a limited amount of livestock feed and water, which is usually reserved for the newborn. Consequently the livestock frequently have to be taken a long distance for water and grazing. This decreases their weight and milk production. Women are responsible for taking care of the calves and they tend to keep them on a starvation diet in order to save most of the heifer's milk for their families.

Livestock As a Source of Food

A Maasai elder is judged largely by the number of sons he has, but even more by the size of his cattle herd. Consequently he is very reluctant to part with his cattle. The cattle they trade to outsiders and those given in payment for the services like that of a blacksmith are usually old or diseased, and no longer of much value in herd building. They are much less concerned about the rest of their livestock and any decrease in the number of sheep, goats, and donkeys. Their willingness to sell some of their cattle is a subtle way they have of reflecting their wealth.

The limited meat consumption of the Maasai shows a decided preference for beef for status reasons. Meat is usually eaten only on ceremonial occasions like childbirth, circumcision, or weddings. It may be eaten "out of ceremony" when the animal is killed by a predator or dies from age or disease. Eating diseased animals has resulted in some livestock diseases being passed to the people. They continue the practice even though they seem to recognize the danger involved. Pregnant women and children are not allowed to eat the meat of diseased animals. The meat is usually prepared by grilling it over an open fire without adding any kind of seasoning. Sometimes it is cooked in a kind of beef stew mixture with certain plant roots and tree bark that they believe has medicinal qualities.

The blood of their livestock is such an essential part of their diet they have developed special butchering techniques which limit the loss of blood. Sheep and goats are easy to control so they are usually suffocated so the blood can be retained in the animal until it can be taken with little or no waste. The cattle are killed by inserting a knife slightly above the first bone of the vertebral column. This results in a quick kill and a minimum blood loss. The actual butchering of the animal must be done with precision because the various cuts of meat are designated for specific members of the extended family. Those that do the butchering are rewarded minimum blood loss. The actual butchering of the animal must be done with precision because the various cuts of meat are designated for specific members of the extended family. Those that do the butchering are rewarded

in their labor by the privilege of drinking some of the fresh blood and eating the contents of the animal's stomach. The elders are given the preferred cuts of meat, and wives and children are usually given the least desirable parts. The warriors live in their own village and are not involved in the distribution of livestock butchered in an enkang.

Their Technology

The Maasai are able to survive quite well without much dependence on technology. What little technology they do need consists mostly of things like jewelry which is valued more for aesthetic than economic reasons. This situation is changing as they develop closer ties with the European cultures. An understanding of most Maasai technology requires looking at it from a sex and age-grade perspective, because most material possessions are not shared by all of the people. In the European societies most technology consists of things like radios, toothbrushes, or wristwatches which either sex and and every age group may own and know how to operate. Consider a typical piece of Maasai technology like a spear. Ownership and operating skill is the exclusive property of the warriors who represent a specific sex and age group.

Most artifacts of Maasai males are related in one way or another to warfare, livestock care, or personal decoration. The women have few domestic utensils; most of their material possessions are in the form of jewelry which is intended not just to enhance their beauty but also indicates their wealth, age, and marital status. The most popular jewelry is the series of wide-beaded necklaces they wear, and the long beaded or leather earrings. They also like bracelets made of metal which they wear on their arms and legs. All of this elaborate jewelry is worn only by married women. The uncircumcised girls wear little or no jewelry.

The main household items of the women are cooking pots and gourds. The earthenware pots are purchased from neighboring tribes as are the gourds. The women are responsible for keeping a fire constantly lit because of the difficulty involved in starting a new fire. Even when traveling, providing that the distance isn't too far, the women are expected to carry hot coals. The men make the fire and when it is necessary to make a new fire they use the friction of a hard pointed stick drilling against a flat piece of wood with a small hole in the center. Animal dung or dry grass is used as a starter.

A few Maasai artifacts are made of metal, including some of the jewelry. The metal products must be bartered from other tribes because they consider the occupation of a blacksmith as degrading. To the Massai making "cowardly" weapons (the bow and arrow, firearms, or any other device that doesn't require close physical contact) for killing is contemptible, even though they are dependent on the skills of the blacksmith for their own weapons. Their contempt is shown in a variety of ways: not speaking to them, talking about them, or touching anything they have handled without first putting animal fat on their hands. Any livestock bought from a blacksmith must be thoroughly washed before being allowed to mingle with their own livestock. The Maasai would never consider marrying into the family of a blacksmith.

Inheritance

If an elder knows he about to die he will usually distribute his property among his sons, along with the responsibility for the payment of any debts he may have. If he should die before making arrangements the eldest son inherits everything and he determines how the property will be distributed among his brothers and stepbrothers.

If the elder is polygamous, the oldest son of each of his wives is responsible for the distribution of the livestock that the wife has in her care. The youngest son inherits all of the mother's personal property. This is considered his reward because the youngest son is responsible for taking care of her in her old age. Only the inheritance rights of the oldest and youngest sons are considered absolute and indisputable. Any further distribution of the parent's property is dependent on their generosity.

If the son is too young to inherit his deceased father's livestock, he may be allowed to have a special circumcision ceremony in order to become eligible to inherit property. Sometimes the deceased father's half-brother may marry the widow and assume responsibility for the livestock until the son goes through the regular circumcision ceremony. If the elder has no children when he dies, his brothers divide his livestock among themselves. A widow may not re-marry if she has living sons, but she is expected to live with men of her husband's age-grade and continue having children for her deceased husband.

Daughters are not allowed to inherit property, and in rare instances an elder may have only daughters. In this case he may prevent the marriage of one of his daughters and keep her at home to have children by any man she may choose. The first son she has will inherit the property and she acts as a sort of trustee until he has gone through the circumcision ceremony.

Another inheritance custom is practiced on rare occasions. Sometimes a wealthy elder's son may be killed during the dangerous period of warriorhood, and he may want to keep the name and memory of his son from being forgotten. This can be done by having a recently circumcised girl of his choice have promiscous sexual relations until she has a son. That son will inherit the warrior's name and property after circumcision, and in the meantime the mother has control of the livestock.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Male Dominance

Maasai society and culture is completely dominated by the men. They own or control almost all property of any value, make all important decisions, and are the center of most social activities. The women are always secondary, and any status they have results primarily from their male relatives. Childbirth is the most recognized contribution of the women, but the status and prestige results primarily from their giving birth to male offspring. They certainly work harder than the men, and although their work is essential it is not given much recognition. They are always in the shadow of their husbands, sons, brothers, and other male relatives.

The Maasai social structure is based primarily on the age-grades of the males, and the close fraternal relationship they develop with other males of the same age-grade. There are junior and senior age-grades in both the warrior and elder age-sets. The uncircumcised boys are excluded from the social structure. Having little status they are ridiculed, abused and overworked.

The Maasai males have four age-grades, and as they progress through each grade their prestige and authority increases. The process begins with the circumcision rite of passage that initiates them into the age-grade of junior warrior. However, the warrior age-set, which includes a generation of Maasai youth, is dominated by the senior warrior age-grade. They, in turn, are dominated by the other two age-grades of junior and senior elders. Each age-grade has leaders usually selected by their peers, but under the strong influence of the elders. The leaders have considerable influence, especially on their peers, but more as a result of their charisma than the position of leadership they hold.

Circumcision Preparatory Ceremony

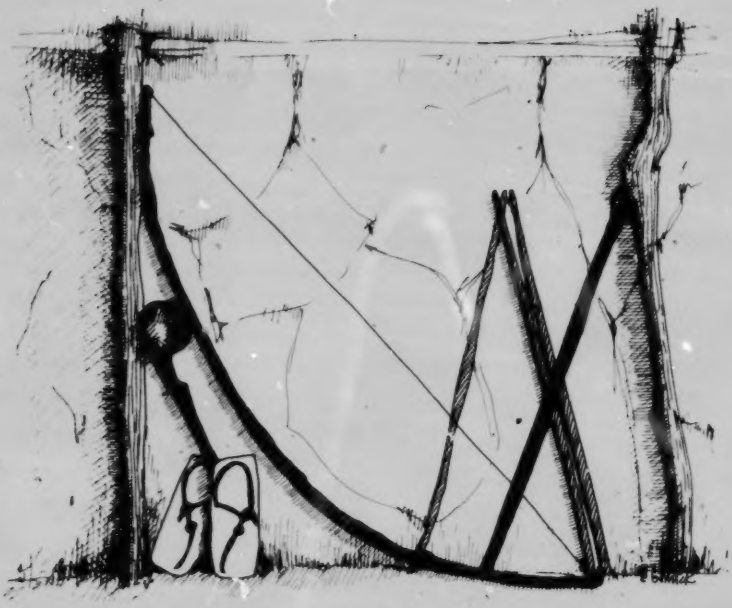
The most important event in the life of every Maasai is the circumcision ceremony. This rite of passage makes the young girls eligible for marriage, and marks the young boys' graduation into the prestigious position of moran or warrior. For both sexes it represents a major transition. The

event as well as the ceremony is much more elaborate for the males and they are given more recognition. However, before any child may go through the circumcision ceremony their father must have gone through a related ceremony in order to make his children eligible for circumcision. The father must have all of his affairs in order, which means primarily that he settles all of his debts. For the actual ceremony he dresses as a warrior, and must live for four days alone in a hut that has been built by his friends near his kraal. At the end of the fourth day his friends come for him, and they return to his dwelling where they drink honey-wine that the father has prepared for the ceremony. During this period his friends refer to him as an old man, and call him by his eldest son's name. The primary intent of this simple ritual is to demonstrate that a father who has children that are eligible for circumcision is also entering a new stage of life.

Male Circumcision Ceremony

The male circumcision ceremony is conducted every five to eight years and includes most males between the ages of ten to sixteen. The young boys are always anxious to be initiated because it represents their first position of authority and respect. The elders determine when a new warrior age-set is needed, and when there are enough mature boys to make up a new age-set. Traditionally, the new class of initiates have the responsibility for fighting any wars, conducting livestock raids on other tribes, and defending their own villages. The elders must be sure that they will have both the quality and quantity of manpower needed to accomplish these duties. Consequently the circumcision rite of passage usually involves a large number of males.

There are a few minor exceptions to this type of ceremony that includes an entire generation of Maasai boys. If an elder should die before any of his sons have been circumcised, the oldest son may be given a special circumcision ceremony in order to be eligible to inherit his father's livestock. Also, a boy with younger sisters who want to get married may be circumcised ahead of his age-grade. This is necessary because girls may not be circumcised before an older brother. In most cases a special circumcision ceremony isn't necessary if the boy is near the age of circumcision and can enlist the aid of his peers and relatives to exert pressure on the elders to allow the formation of a new age-set.



When the elders have consented to form a new age-set, the eligible boys go from village to village trying to recruit as many peers as possible to assure numerical strength. They then collect gifts of cattle and honey-wine and visit the village of a favorite medicine man (Laibon). The decision on the specific date of the circumcision must be made by a Maasai medicine man. Once the time has been established, the boys embark on an extended period of celebration lasting two or three months. They cover their bodies with white chalk, and go from village to village "living off of the land." It is a time of complete freedom with no responsibility beyond just enjoying themselves.

The major ritual of this celebration involves what they call "knock down the bullock." The boys chase a specially selected solid black bullock which they must bring to the ground by its horns, using only their hands. Only boys whose fathers participated in this horn-seizing ceremony are allowed to participate. Those not eligible must remain in the dwelling of their parents during the ceremony. The bullock used in the ceremony is the property of the spokesman they have chosen to represent their age-grade. The elders bring the bullock into the village while the boys wait

some distance away for the starting signal. Boys of the same clan sometimes unite against boys of other clans. It is an event of considerable prestige and they feel the glory is better shared as a clan member than risking a chance of failure through strictly individual effort. After the bullock is brought to the ground it is butchered for a feast, and their new leader is given the honor of the first drink of the animal's blood. The hide of the bullock is cut into small pieces and fashioned into rings which are worn on the right hand of the boys who participated in the ceremony. After a few days the rings are thrown away in the cattle kraals of their mothers. At the conclusion of this period of celebration the boys return to the dwelling of their parents and remain there until their circumcision. During this period of celebration the age-set, which consists of an entire generation of young men is divided into two age-grades. They are referred to as the left hand and right hand circumcision grades; the younger boys belong to the former and the older boys to the latter. The boys of the right hand circumcision age-grade will go through the circumcision ceremony a few years ahead of the younger age-grade. However, both age-grades complete their term as warriors at the same time, so the older boys are senior warriors for about twice as long as the younger boys.

The first stage of the actual circumcision ceremony is to shave the heads of the initiates. The event is celebrated by butchering a sheep or bullock that was born about the same time as the boy being circumcised. Beer and honey-wine are also served, as they are at most celebrations. The next day the boy must find a certain tree, and cut a branch to plant near the entrance of his parents' dwelling. Early on the morning of the third day the boy goes alone outside the village where he removes his clothing and sits on the open ground facing away from the village. He occasionally pours cold water over his body, but otherwise remains inactive. The cold morning air plus the water act as a partial anesthetic in preparation for the painful circumcision operation. When properly chilled the boy returns to his parents' dwelling and sits to the right of the entrance on a cattle-hide mat that has been placed there by his mother. It is there that the circumcision is performed with the boy's father and another elder giving moral support. If it is known that the boy has had sexual relations with a married woman, most elders will refuse to witness the operation unless they are bribed with a few cattle.

Just before the surgery all of the cattle of the initiate's father must be brought in from grazing and put in his kraal. The father then gives his son one final dousing of cold water and straightens his legs in preparation for the operation. The actual surgery takes less than a minute, and is traditionally performed by a member of the Dorobo or Kikuyu tribe who is paid a couple of sheep or a bullock for his service. If the boy shows any sign of fear or pain during the surgery both he and his parents will be subjected to ridicule. However, the parents are usually aware of their son's lack of courage and tend to avoid social contacts until the issue is somewhat forgotten.

When the circumcision operation is completed new sandals are put on the boy's feet by the elder who witnessed the operation, and together they walk silently backwards into the village. The initiate is instructed that during the healing period he must not fight, have sexual relations, wash, eat or even handle the milk or blood of cattle, and must always return to the village before the cattle are brought in from grazing. The boy returns to his parents' dwelling and sleeps on the same cattle hide his mother prepared for his circumcision. He remains there for four days under the care of his mother for his initial recovery from the surgery. A bow and arrows are made for him by the elders for the next stage of his initiation. On the morning of the fifth day he emerges from his isolation dressed in women's clothing and wearing the earrings of a circumcised woman. His face is covered with a white paste-like substance made from a mixture of chalk and milk. Charcoal is then used to draw a variety of abstract designs on the face of the new initiate. During the next few days while their circumcision wounds continue to heal, the young men have a celebration similar to the one held prior to their circumcision. The most significant difference is that they show a much greater interest in girls. A favorite activity is to ambush young girls they like and shoot them with arrows that have been blunted with a piece of wood or honeycomb. They use the bow and arrows that were made for them during the circumcision ceremony. The bow and arrow is also used to kill small birds which are skinned and stuffed and fitted on a vine or wooden framework that is worn as a headdress at ceremonies and dances. If ostrich feathers are available they are also added to the headdress. However, any boy who cried or in any way showed fear during the circumcision surgery is not allowed to participate in this activity.

This period of circumcision ceremony continues until their circumcision wounds are completely healed, and they may then discard the clothing of women. Their heads are also shaved for the final time by the mothers, or one of the father's other wives if their mothers are deceased. Their heads will not be shaved again until they become junior elders. Long hair is a characteristic of warriorhood; all others shave their heads. The Maasai always consider all hair as offensive and tend to remove it from every part of their bodies, including the eyebrows. They are amused and somewhat nauseated by people who allow the hair to grow, and that includes the Europeans. The name they gave the first white explorers into East Africa was "L-Ojuju " which simply means hairy. However, for the Maasai warriors the hair is the hallmark of their personal appearance. It is also the center of much of their social life since they spend much of their time grooming one another. The initial step in preparing the hair is to coat it with a mixture of animal fat, and red ochre clay which inevitably includes some cattle dung. A part is made in the hair extending from ear to ear, and it is combed flat and away from the part. The strands of hair on both sides of the part are rubbed between the fingers until they form into small rope-like twists. The strands in front of the part are bound together into three short ponytail formations; one hangs over the center of the forehead, and the other two are placed over each temple. The strands in back of the part are allowed to hang free to neck level, but if the hair is any longer it is bound together around a piece of wood into pigtails. There are some minor variations in the way they arrange their hair, but this is the most traditional and still the most popular style. They usually carry a dried cow's stomach to protect their hair during the rainy season.

The Life of the Warrior

It is the warrior's responsibility to protect the Maasai people and their livestock from predatory animals and enemy tribes. When possible they are also expected to conduct livestock raids on other tribes in order to add to the size of their own herds. In spite of the danger involved they show no indication of fear; Maasai traditions dictate that a warrior fears nothing. Neither do they seem to experience any moral guilt feelings about stealing and killing, which is understandable since they believe that all cattle are the rightful property of the Maasai. The warriors live in the manyattas

located at sites selected by elders in consultation with a medicine man. Unlike the enkang of their childhood, the manyatta is seldom enclosed in a thornbush fence; it isn't considered necessary because the warriors can adequately defend themselves.

When a junior warrior moves into his manyatta he takes with him some of the cattle from the herds of both parents. He is accompanied by an older female relative who acts as a sort of maid during his period of warriorhood. The woman may be an aunt, grandmother, or even his mother. Some young unmarried girls who are usually sisters or cousins of the warriors also live in the manyatta. Their function is primarily social, although they may assist the older women in some of the lighter housekeeping chores. When the warriors are not on a cattle raid they spend their evenings dancing and the girls are their partners. They also serve as ego boosters, and their presence is a strong incentive for the young men to remain well-groomed and keep in good physical condition. It also encourages competitive game activities which improve the kind of skills they need to be good warriors. The tendency is to assume that this kind of living arrangement inevitably leads to a great deal of promiscuity. This does not appear to be entirely true. Some of the residents do engage in sexual relations but not on a scale that could be considered promiscuous. The girls' activities are chaperoned by their mothers and grandmothers because their families are somewhat disgraced if she should get pregnant. Sometimes a girl may deliberately get pregnant by a young man she likes, however, in order to avoid having to marry someone chosen for her by her parents.

Life in the manyatta tends to fall into a predictable daily routine. The women and girls get up with the sunrise to do the morning milking and see that the calves are fed. The uninitiated younger brothers of the warriors arise soon after that and take the cattle out for grazing and watering. The calves remain in the manyatta within a small thornbush stockade under the supervision of one of the young boys. The warriors are the last to get up. They start the day by drinking most of the fresh warm milk collected by the women earlier that day. The women and girls spend the rest of the morning cleaning the manyatta, especially the areas where the cattle and calves were kept during the night. They also prepare and cook vegetables for their midday meal. The milk left over from the morning milking is reserved for the warriors because it is taboo for them to consume anything except milk

in the manyatta. The warriors spend the morning in conversation, grooming one another's hair, or walking outside of the village to supervise their younger brothers' care of the cattle. After their simple midday meal the older women often leave the village to collect firewood or to get water; if they have completed these chores they usually remain in the manyatta visiting with other women, making jewelry, or taking a short nap. The young girls spend the afternoon with the warriors in conversation, or singing and dancing. In the late afternoon the young boys return the cattle to the manyatta for the evening milking by the older women. Most of the milk taken in the evening milking is consumed by the warriors who spend the remainder of the evening talking, and singing and dancing with the young girls. The older women and boys see that the cattle and calves are properly cared for, and go to bed soon after sunset. The warriors and young girls continue singing and dancing for a couple of hours longer before they retire for the night.

The typical manyatta has about one hundred and seventy inhabitants; about a third of them are warriors, and the rest are the women, girls, and younger brothers. The boys sleep outside near the cattle that are placed in their care. The small cattle dung dwellings are usually shared by a couple of warriors; they sleep on one end and the older women and girls at the other end. Some of the young girls escape the supervision of the older women to share the bed of one of the warriors.

Beyond this pleasant daily routine of the manyatta there are occasions when the warriors are expected to apply the skills of their training. That usually involves taking the initiative, because most tribes have been so intimidated by the reputation of the Maasai warriors that they seldom consider taking the offensive. The days of warfare, that involved taking land and wives, as well as cattle, are a thing of the past. Maasai wars are a subject only talked about by the elders as they recall their youth and the stories told to them by their fathers. The only warrior activity at this point in time involves the occasional raiding of cattle from other tribes to add to the herds of their fathers. A Maasai warrior owns nothing beyond his clothing, spear, club, shield and sword. The cattle raids are usually conducted early in the morning; the time and place is always established by a medicine man after consultion with the elders. The warriors are always too anxious for action and a bit of glory to decide. The warriors take only cattle when they

raid another tribe. Taking other livestock is considered unworthy of their efforts. Only cattle are highly valued by the Maasai. However, the younger brothers usually follow the raiding party and rustle as many of the goats, sheep, and donkeys as they can. The raids almost always involve some killing and it is very prestigious for a warrior to return to his manyatta with blood on his spear or sword. They have sometimes been known to kill women in order to have human blood on their spears. However, they would never deliberately kill a pregnant woman since they believe it would result in their own children being born dead. When the warriors return to their manyatta after a successful cattle raid they are met by the young girls who sprinkle them with milk to acknowledge the victory. Their reception is also followed by an extended period of singing, dancing, and feasting to celebrate their success.

The governments of Tanzania and Kenya have both outlawed the establishment of the manyatta villages of the warriors; their intent being to eliminate the warrior phase of the Maasai social structure which they contend is the ultimate source of almost all Maasai illegal activity. It is true, of course, that the warriors are responsible for most of what the government considers illegal. However, the government judges the Maasai by standards they have acquired from the European cultures, and they want the Maasai to completely ignore the traditions and laws of the Maasai. For the most part the Maasai continue to follow their traditions even though they are sometimes caught by government officials and punished by imprisonment, a fine in shillings, or strokes of a cane on their backs.

Warrior Taboos

The position of warriors is very prestigious, and they are entitled to many privileges that others are denied. However, being a warrior also carries with it a number of taboos that they must observe. For example, a warrior is forbidden to drink the milk of his father's cattle. Consequently each warrior must drink the milk provided by a fellow warrior's cattle. While in their manyatta the warriors are only allowed to drink milk which must be handed to them by a member of their age-grade. The milk is never consumed in the presence of women, but always with other warriors. In part, the custom seems to be intended to reinforce the separation of warriors and married women.

Most of the warriors' eating taboos have to do with eating meat. He is not allowed to eat meat that has been handled or even seen by women. Meat can only be eaten on an empty stomach that has digested all milk products. So before eating meat they fast for a few days, or take an herb which causes vomiting and cleans out the stomach. They are forbidden to eat meat in their manyatta, so cattle are taken to a secluded area where

a temporary shelter is built. They butcher the cattle and gorge themselves on meat. This is a privilege only allowed warriors, to give them the necessary strength to fight their battles.

Meat eating, like all warrior activities, is always a group involvement. A warrior must always be accompanied by at least one other warrior. They

are not permitted to even defecate without another warrior being present. The custom originated at a time when they were constantly at war and provided protection against possible ambush. The custom survives, but it seems to be more for symbolic than practical reasons. When alone, a warrior may stick his spear in the ground and hang his clothing and headdress on it so he has the companion tradition requires. The other taboos are on activities prized by elders and appear to be incentives to become an elder. Warriors are not allowed to use tobacco, drink beer or honey-wine, or have sexual relations with married women.

Maasai warriors are striking in appearance. They are tall, slender, and usually seem to be standing on one leg, leaning against their spears with their other leg resting on the side of their knee. In addition to spears they carry what appear to be walking sticks, short bulbed clubs, and sheathed knives in their belts. All of these implements are weapons and their only function is for killing enemy warriors. Their other important weapon is a defensive shield which they only carry in battle or as protection against predatory animals. The shield is made from the hide of the water buffalo and so uniquely decorated that its owner can easily be identified. A long russet cloth over his shoulder adequately covers the front and back of his body, but leaves it fully exposed from the sides. Nudity is obviously not one of their taboos.

Becoming an Elder

As the ranks of the senior elders are diminished through death and the junior elders fill their vacancies, it becomes necessary for the warriors to become junior elders. Determining the time and place for these changes in age-grade are decided by the senior elders in consultation with a medicine man. This is one decision which it is particularly necessary for the senior elders to make because of the extreme reluctance of the warriors to give up their role as warriors. They find the transition so objectionable that many must be literally forced to become junior elders. Being a junior elder carries prestige and responsibility, but the prestige isn't as romantic and the responsibilities are more mundane than those of a warrior. The transition is celebrated with considerable feasting and ritual.

This rite of passage begins with the construction of a special manyatta

for the ceremony. The location of the manyatta is selected by the senior elders in consultation with a medicine man. The same medicine man also "blesses" the manyatta after it is built by sprinkling milk and honey throughout the area. The most important of these initial activities involves the selection of a leader for the new junior elders. He is chosen by the senior elders, and must be without imperfections. To the Maasai this means being in good health, without any scars, sexually potent, right handed, and not guilty of murder. A assistant leader is also selected, but he has little prestige or authority. The senior elders decision on who will be their leader, and when the initiation ceremony will be held, is a well-guarded secret. It is assumed that the warriors, in their reluctance to become elders, might avoid the ceremony if they knew when it was going to be conducted. They also assume that if the leader they have chosen was aware of his selection he might commit a murder to make himself ineligible for leadership. On the day of the initiation the new leader becomes aware of his selection when he is suddenly physically overpowered by his peers. They shave his head and remove all possessions that identify him as a warrior and replace them with all of the trappings associated with being a junior elder. This somewhat violent initiation is followed by a feast, and the new leader is given the honor of being the first to drink the blood of a bullock butchered for the occasion. In this instance the blood is not mixed with milk and is consumed directly as it comes from the slaughtered animal.

Another traditional ritual requires the punishment of young men that violated taboos when they were warriors. The taboo most frequently violated by warriors is the rule against having sexual relations with married women. A special hut is constructed within the ceremonial manyatta and the warriors who violated taboos are required to enter the hut and urinate. Those not guilty of taboo violations stand outside of the hut and yell insults and sometimes throw rocks at the hut. The situation often leads to fights among the young men. It is a simple ceremony, but quite humiliating for those singled out for punishment. The names of the young men being punished are kept secret until the very last moment since they might otherwise avoid the event. It would probably also be avoided by the young man's parents who share his disgrace and sometimes even the punishment. The boy's mother is sometimes whipped with sticks by the mothers of warriors that did not violate taboos. The ceremony is concluded with the slaughter of a white bullock which is feasted on by the elders and the warriors who didn't violate taboos as warriors.

The new junior elders are now permitted to marry and they begin to concentrate their thoughts and efforts along those lines. The recently selected leader of the junior elders is the first to marry and he may choose any unmarried girl he desires. If the girl's father has previously committed her in marriage to another man, that contract is permitted to be broken. The girl may refuse his proposal, but that is unlikely because it is very

prestigious and the man is considered highly desirable as a husband. It is also a deeply rooted tradition and the Maasai are reluctant to break with such strong traditions. Besides, the girls are accustomed to having their mates selected for them.

The final ceremony is to form the junior and senior warriors into one

age-set as junior elders. The medicine man is consulted to determine the time and place of the event and special huts are constructed for the most important feast of the rite of passage. During this elaborate celebration of meat-eating and beer-drinking the newly initiated elders will eat meat in the presence of women for the first time in their lives. Women serve the meat so it is also the first time the men will have eaten meat that has been touched by a woman. If the man is married, the meat is served by his wife, but if he isn't married it may be served by any circumcised woman. If the wife has committed adultery with a man of a younger age-grade than her husband she may not handle meat that her husband eats. To remove this taboo she must get a heifer from her father's herd and present it to her husband as payment to forgive her for the taboo violation. After the heifer has been added to her husband's herd she will be permitted to prepare and serve meat to him.

As a final act of the elderhood initiation, the senior elders give a name to the new group of elders. Like most events it is celebrated with feasting on meat and beer drinking. This concludes the warrior's rite of passage and the young men begin a new stage of life as elders. They marry, take up residence in an enkang, and begin to build their own herds of livestock. The responsibilities of junior elders are essentially mental and require little physical exertion. They supervise activities like the care of livestock and construction of an enkang, but the women and children do the actual work. Since the initiates will eventually make all important decisions, most of their time is spent in consultation with other elders. Since most decisions are made by the senior elders, they are only permitted to listen to the deliberations. Much of the junior elder's time is spent in conversation with other elders and playing a game called en-geshi. This involves circulating stone pebbles on what looks like a cupcake baking tray.

Female Circumcision Ceremony

The cliforidectomy of girls is given a minimum of attention when compared with the circumcision rite of passage of the males. Nevertheless, for the girls the circumcision ceremony is very crucial because they are not permitted to marry until they have been circumcised. Then they must marry immediately after their circumcision wounds have healed. Most Maasai girls try to delay the circumcision ceremony until long after puberty. They enjoy the relatively carefree life in the warriors' manyatta and are

reluctant to exchange that lifestyle for the difficult and unexciting life of their mothers and other married women. The girl soon finds that the pressures are too strong to resist. Other girls her age are going through the ceremony; or she meets a boy she would like to marry. She realizes that there is no place in the Maasai society for unmarried women. Her parents exert strong pressure. When a Maasai mother begins to notice that her daughter's breasts start to droop a bit she informs her husband, and they both insist that it is time for the clitoridectomy. The girl's father is responsible for making the necessary arrangements to celebrate the event. He makes or buys beer and honeywine and kills a ram to serve the guests attending the celebration. They slaughter a ram rather than a goat or cow because they believe it will assure her fertility. Their guests are expected to bring most of the other food and drinks that will be served at the ceremony.

Early in the morning the day following the celebration they perform the clitoridectomy in the dwelling of her mother. If her mother is not living, the operation takes place in the dwelling of one of her father's other wives. The surgery is usually done by a woman of the Dorobo tribe who is skilled in performing the operation. Because of their specialized skills the Dorobo are the only tribe for whom the Maasai show some degree of respect. Just before the operation a hole is made in the roof of the dwelling so their god can witness the event and give his blessing. The surgery is conducted with the initiate sitting on a cowhide mat. Only married women are allowed to be present during the operation. Unlike the males, she may cry or show other evidence of pain. However, it is considered a bad omen if she should bleed as a result of the surgery.

During the healing process that follows the circumcision operation the initiate is considered to be unclean and consequently taboo. She is forbidden to leave the dwelling of her mother or speak to any male. She must also dress in a way that reflects her new position. Her face is covered with a light layer of white clay and she wears a special necklace. The necklace is much like the beaded necklaces worn by most Maasai women except that it has long strands of beads attached to the front and is decorated with cowrie shells and ostrich feathers. The cowrie shells are to assure her fertility. After her circumcisions wounds are healed she must get married and assume the responsibilities that go with that position in life. Unlike the men, initiated women do not have age-grades and age-sets, and do not have any form of special associations based on their rite of passage.

MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

Courtship and Marriage

To be an adult and unmarried is inconceivable to the Maasai; the exception being the very old who have survived their spouses. Their attitude toward marriage is reflected in the reasons they give for practicing polygyny; so all girls will have a husband. Neither sex may marry before they have been circumcised. The girls must get married soon after their circumcision, but the boys are not permitted to marry until they have served their time as warriors. Neither sex seems to be at all anxious to get married. The men enjoy being warriors and have little desire to become junior elders. The girls like the carefree social life of the manyatta, and are reluctant to sacrifice that for the monotonous hard work of a married woman.

Courtship is initiated by the males and usually begins prior to the girl's circumcision and consequently before she is eligible for marriage. An exception being the occasional girl who for some reason isn't pursued by the young men. In this case no courtship or bride price is involved. The girl's father gets a fellow elder to take her as an additional wife. The girls seldom object because that is preferable to being unmarried.

When a boy meets a girl he would like to marry he gives her a simple chain necklace, and a gift of tobacco for her father. If he continues to be interested and the girl indicates the feeling is mutual, he takes a gift of honey to the parents which symbolizes his seriousness. Part of the honey is eaten by the girl's mother and other women relatives, and the rest is made into beer for her father and his friends. At this time a small ceremony is held and the boy is told by the girl's father if he is acceptable as a husband. If he should be rejected, the relationship is terminated with no obligation for the girl's parents to return any of the gifts the young man has given them. The daughter is consulted as the decision is being made and her parents almost always agree to follow her advice. If the young man's proposal is accepted the couples' relationship is considered binding and it is taboo for anyone to attempt to break it up. From the time of this initial agreement until they marry, the prospective groom is expected to make occasional gifts to her parents. The type of gifts and how frequently they

are given depends on what he can afford and what the girl and her parents demand. Most of the gifts are traditional, in the form of livestock, honey, and tobacco, and are usually presented to the girl's father. The largest amount of livestock, honey, and tobacco is presented at the time of the girl's circumcision to help celebrate the event.

It is not at all unusual for the betrothal to occur even before, or soon after, the birth of the eventual bride. Maasai parents sometimes want to establish close social ties with a particular family, and this is most easily accomplished through intermarriage. The marriage commitment is formalized by a simple ritual involving the pregnant woman and her prospective son-in-law. During her pregnancy he rubs a mixture of animal fat and red ochre on her stomach. The animal fat used is usually from a sheep or

goat which are the animals the Maasai associate with women, and consequently most likely to assure the birth of a female child. If the child is a male the commitment between the families is understandably cancelled. However, if the child is female the prospective groom is not only obligated to marry her, but during the time she is growing up he must give her as well as her parents, occasional gifts.

Regardless of the nature of the betrothal or courtship process the couple may not marry until the girl has been circumcised. When she has fully recovered from the circumcision surgery the prospective groom takes the initial bride price to her father. The first payment usually consists of two bullocks and three heifers. The cattle must all be of the same color and without any noticeable scars. One bullock is butchered and eaten to celebrate the event.

The other bullock is allowed to live to keep the heifers company. In many respects the custom reflects their own attitudes on the propriety of male dominance and polygamy. Within a few weeks after the initial payment, the prospective groom is expected to return with the final installment of the bride price. If he delays too long the girl's father will usually send for him. This second and final bride price payment consists of three sheep, usually two female and one male. A feast is held and one of the gift sheep is butchered along with at least one sheep taken from the herd of the girl's father. This process of payment is what Maasai tradition has established as the ideal social norm, but is not always followed. Sometime the final payment of the bride price isn't made until years after the couple are married. There is a stigma attached to the family of the indebted groom, and his father-in-law has the right to take back his daughter as well as their children if the debt is not paid. As a result, the relatives of the groom frequently contribute toward the payment of the bride price. They are not obligated to help; it is strictly voluntary.

When the groom goes to get his new bride from her parent's village he is accompanied by two close male friends. Like the bride, the men have covered their bodies with a mixture of animal fat and red ochre which makes their skin shine with a reddish tint. The attire of the young woman reflects her new status as a married woman. She wears long leather earrings, a series of beaded necklaces, and a number of metal bracelets on her arms and legs. Traditionally Maasai married women wore a long leather dress decorated with cowrie shells. Today most married women wear a wrap-around skirt with a second long cloth worn over their shoulders. This

represents a significant change in the young bride's attire because as an unmarried girl, she was only permitted to wear a wrap-around skirt and very simple jewelry.

The new bride is expected to show great reluctance in leaving the enkang of her parents. She delays their departure by talking at length with her mother and other women friends. Even after they leave for her husband's enkang she continues to show her resistance by walking slowly and using any other means to delay the trip. It is mostly a sham, but for the bride it is a prestigious experience. There is a simple ceremony when the new bride arrives at her husband's enkang. It reflects her new responsibilities as a Maasai wife. She is given livestock by her husband and his relatives which will provide food, clothing, and shelter for the children she will have, and an inheritance of cattle for her sons. The amount of livestock given her is dependent to a large extent on whether her husband has other wives. The first wife receives the largest share of his livestock, which may be as much as half of his herd. His first wife is the most prestigious and influential wife, and her sons are entitled to the largest share of the inheritance when the husband dies. Each additional wife gets a decreasing percentage of his livestock. If he has a number of wives, those he marries later may only get what livestock the previous wives may care to give. In some instances, his additional wives may actually add to the size of their husband's herd. If she was married before, her father is obligated to give her new husband the amount of livestock he received in bride price from the first husband.

With the assistance of other women, including her husband's other wives, the new wife builds her own dwelling. Her primary responsibilities as a Maasai wife involve the care of children and household chores like preparing food, collecting firewood, cleaning hides for clothing and bedding, building and maintaining dwellings and caring for livestock. Much of her time is spent making herself attractive for her husband. Her head must be kept shaved by a woman friend using a double-edged razor held in her hand. She wears an elaborate amount of jewelry. It enhances her appearance, reflects her husband's wealth, and even indicates things about her situation in life. The jewelry she wears shows if she is circumcised, if she is married, and even if she has a circumcised son.

According to Maasai tradition a marriage established through this somewhat elaborate courtship and marriage process can never be dissolved. This attitude is in large part responsible for their low divorce rate. However, there are instances when marriages are dissolved. It is usually initiated by the husband because the wife is infertile, lazy, or violates their permissive rules on extra-marital sexual behavior. If an elder does divorce his wife the portion of the bride price that he has paid is not returned, but any additional payments are cancelled. Maasai wives don't have the authority to divorce their husbands, so desertion is the only means they have for ending their marriage. Their usual reasons for deserting are because they prefer another (usually younger) man, or because they are abused by their husbands or his other wives. When a wife deserts her husband there is no obligation to return the bride price, but the husband is entitled to their children.

Extra-Marital Relationships

Extra-marital relationships are not only acceptable to the Maasai, but they are the norm. The conditions under which extra-marital relations are acceptable are well-defined, and the Maasai are not as promiscuous as assumed by the early European explorers. Adultery requires the consent of everyone involved, although the conditions are so strongly defined by tradition that any thought of refusal is usually beyond consideration. A wife is only permitted to have sexual relations with members of the husband's age-grade, and all other sexual relations are rejected and punished. It is the wife who carries the major share of responsibility in an adulterous relationship and she receives most of the punishment when taboos are violated. She is usually beaten by her husband or as an alternative she is expected to solicit a gift of livestock for him from her relatives. If the beating her husband gives her is excessive she may run away and take shelter in the dwelling of a member of her husband's age-grade. After a brief "cooling off" period she will be escorted by the male friend back to her own dwelling. When this procedure is followed, the husband is not likely to continue the abuse of his wife because it would be considered a breach of Maasai etiquette. Women almost never get so involved in an adulterous relationship that they seriously consider permanently leaving their husbands. If she should, the children become the property of the husband, and he may also take any children she may have in the future. Maasai women are usually not willing to give up custody of their children, so they almost always return to their husbands.

STARTING A NEW GENERATION

Pregnancy

The most important duties of a Maasai wife are associated with bearing and raising children. The couple and their relatives watch the new wife for the first symptoms of her pregnancy. Childbearing is particularly crucial in establishing a good relationship with the relatives of her husband. She is never really accepted by her husband's relatives until she has a child. Her most immediate reaction to her pregnancy is to abstain from sexual relations until her unborn child is weaned, which will be when the child is about two years of age. To assure this she removes all of her jewelry so she will be less attractive to men.

Maasai women believe they have control over becoming pregnant because they assume that it is the result of having sexual relations within the week following menstruation. Nevertheless, there are some unwanted pregnancies, usually involving uninitiated girls. If her pregnancy can be kept secret she may seek an abortion. The operation is performed by a medicine man who inserts a stick into the vaginal passage to induce the abortion. She informs the boy responsible, and he must pay the medicine man's fee in livestock for the operation. However, if her pregnancy is known, particularly by her parents, they will probably prevent the abortion. Instead, she will immediately be initiated into marital status, which simply involves performing the clitoridectomy, but without the usual public ceremony. The boy responsible must pay for the operation as well as give her father livestock and honey wine to compensate him for being denied the opportunity to host the feast and ceremony of her initiation. If the boy should decide to marry the girl, the gifts he has given the girl's father will be considered part of the bride price payment.

In addition to the restraints placed on her sexual behavior, a pregnant woman is expected to follow a diet. The dietary restrictions have more to do with how the food is prepared than what she is allowed to eat. The primary purpose of the diet seems to be to prevent her from gaining weight. They believe that being thin is healthy for both the mother and her unborn child. It is also an indispensable attribute in their concept of beauty. Maasai women are very slim, but that could be in part a consequence of their hard

work as well as their diet. They have little knowledge of nutrition so their diet is based primarily on superstitions and traditional eating habits. A pregnant women is encouraged to eat large amounts of animal fat, and she is allowed to eat all of the grain products that she wants. Strong emphasis is placed on drinking a lot of water. Even the milk she drinks is diluted with water, and it must also be sour. It is assumed that regular milk goes directly to the fetus and results in a weight gain which makes delivery more difficult. She may not drink the milk of a cow that is about to "dry up" because that kind of milk is thought to be so heavy that it is very difficult to dilute.

Pregnant women are relieved of the usual restrictions on meat eating. They believe that pregnancy causes a women to need more meat for the additional strength she will need for childbirth. As a consequence, pregnant women usually do increase their meat consumption; this is primarily because they are fond of meat, and the restrictions limiting meat eating to ceremonial occasions are absent. Unlike other women, they are allowed to eat meat at any time and they are somewhat indulged in their request for meat. Even if a Maasai elder, not of her clan or sub-clan, butchers an animal she will be given some of the meat should her husband request it. However, the meat must come from livestock that was healthy when it was butchered.

The rest of a pregnant woman's diet consists mostly of certain herbs and plant roots. They are thought to have health-giving properties that are especially beneficial for purifying her blood. Like all Maasai she must consume the plant that induces vomiting so that milk and meat are not in her stomach at the same time.

Childbirth

The birth of a Maasai child is almost always in the dwelling of the mother. It is considered a bad omen for the baby to be born anywhere else. It is a major event in the enkang, and most of the women are involved in one way or another. The other wives of her husband are most directly involved, including one who acts as midwife. Most of the other women of the enkang remain outside the entrance to the dwelling and act as a sort of cheering section singing songs to assure a good delivery and a healthy child. All of the women bring gifts to the mother. The gifts given are usually milk, honey, and animal fat.

If it is the mother's first childbirth, she will deliver the child from a squatting position. The first childbirth is assumed to be a difficult delivery and that position is considered to be comfortable for the mother and most likely to assure the delivery of a healthy child. Any additional children she may have are delivered lying on her back.

All males, including the father of the child, are not allowed in or even near the dwelling during the delivery. The moment the baby is born and

the sex determined the midwife calls loudly for blood to be taken from a heifer or a bullock. The heifer indicates that the baby is a girl, and the bullock that it is a boy. In this way the father is told the sex of his child. The blood of the animal called for by the midwife is brought to the dwelling and given to the mother to drink.

The sex of the child is very important. Like most societies, the Maasai have a strong preference for males. However, unlike most societies, multiple births are also valued, especially if the babies are male. Although the birth of twins is rare it is quite compatible with their practice of polygamy. One of the babies is given to one of the husband's other wives to nurse.

Should the child be born dead or deformed, it is assumed that the parents violated their sexual taboo against having sexual relations after they were aware of her pregnancy. The women of the village whip the mother, and the men ridicule the father. If the child is deformed, it is killed.

Immediately after the birth of a normal child the mother and infant are cleaned with milk. At the same time a sheep is butchered and the meat is shared by the women of her village. The mother and the infant are given some of the animal fat, and both are fed as much as they can consume. The fat is also mixed with red ochre and used to lubricate and beautify their skin. Unlike most preliterate societies the Maasai attach little significance to the umbilical cord beyond their custom of throwing it into the general area where the cattle are confined.

The father of the child celebrates the event by butchering a bullock which he shares with the other elders in the enkang. This feasting part of the birth ceremony is usually repeated the next day when friends and relatives from other villages arrive to participate in the celebration. According to tradition the father must place the infant on the ground of the cattle entrance to the enkang before the cattle return in the evening. If the infant is killed or deformed it is assumed that the mother was conceived by a man of her sub-clan, or someone outside of her husband's age-grade.

The mother remains confined in her dwelling for a few days after the child is born. All of her duties are assumed by the other women of the village. The father may not enter the dwelling for a couple of weeks after the birth, and his wife cannot prepare or share food with him before the child can walk. The father is also not allowed to hold the child if he has had sexual relations with one of his other wives the previous evening.

The most important ceremony following the birth is the day the child is given its permanent name. At birth the infant is given a temporary name, which is common practice in societies with a high infant mortality rate. The mother and infant prepare for the naming event by having their heads shaved. The father of the infant selects a choice bullock from his herd and butchers it to share with his male friends. Maasai men are served the meat by their wives, but they do not eat with them. Even the men prefer eating alone after they become elders, and they usually take their share of the meat back to their own dwelling.

The head of the butchered bullock is placed near the entrance of the parents' dwelling. It is one of the few times that the hide of an animal is skinned and tanned with the tail intact. The father and three of his closest friends decide the permanent name of the child. Traditionally the decision is made when the mother takes her infant to do the evening milking. When she returns she is told the child's name.

Infancy and Childhood

Maasai childhood is not a carefree and an indulged stage of life as it is in many societies. About the age of seven children begin to assume a major portion of the work in the enkang. However, prior to that time they are indulged somewhat and play the sort of games characteristic of children throughout most of the world. Little girls play with dolls which are made by their mothers out of mud or a dried fruit. They also play at cooking with utensils also made of mud which they fill with water and ingredients like grass and vegetable parts discarded by the mother. The favorite activity of young boys is to play war. Using pebbles or small fruit to represent cattle they raid attack their enemy's village and attempt to take their cattle. They also hunt small game animals like lizards and celebrate a kill like their older brothers who are warriors.

Young boys and girls sometimes play together, and their favorite games involve playing the roles of their parents. Using pebbles and dried fruit to represent people and cattle, they construct enkangs; the girls play at cooking and the boys herd their cattle. Like children throughout the world, much of their play activity is very constructive because it involves imitating the role activities that they will assume as adults.

Even in early childhood Maasai children are given some minor chores to do, but they aren't seriously reprimanded if they should neglect them. When possible they are also given most things they request. Even as infants they are fed when they cry rather than on a schedule. If the mother is busy, the infant is breast-fed by one of the other wives of the husband.

During the first few months the infant is carried on the mother's back, but as it becomes increasingly active it is carried on her right hip. Maasai mothers wean their infants when they are about two years old, and during that period the mother and infant are inseparable. After being

weaned, the child is given greater freedom, partly because the mother is expected to resume sexual relations with her husband. Sometime between weaning and the age of five the child's lower incisors are removed and animal dung is placed on the cheeks near the extracted teeth to relieve the pain. It is assumed that this custom of teeth extraction originated as a protection against lockjaw in order to feed the afflicted person. The medicine man usually removes the second set of incisors at the time of circumcision.

Maasai fathers are very proud and fond of their children, but display little physical affection beyond occasionally picking the child up for a moment then quickly putting it back down. Neither parent physically punishes their children beyond slight taps on any part of their body except the head. Personal habits like toilet training are never punished, and left entirely to the child.

Around the age of seven, children are expected to take the chores assigned them more seriously. The girls are expected to assist their mother

and sisters on almost all of the chores assigned to women, which primarily involve milking the cattle, sewing hides, cleaning their dwelling and the cattle pen, carrying water, taking care of their younger siblings, and applying the mixture of cattle dung and water to repair the holes in their dwelling which are constantly inflicted by the sun and rain. They do not collect firewood. That chore, like most hard labor, is the responsibility of the old women. If the girl has an older brother who is a warrior, she may live in his manyatta. However, she assumes the same chores that she would in her parents' enkang. Most girls prefer living in the manyatta because it is much more exciting than life in the parents' enkang.

The boys from around the age of five, are expected to accompany their older brothers when they take the livestock out for grazing. However, they have little responsibility beyond learning what they must do later when they must handle the livestock. It is about that time that they have their ear lobes pierced and a series of wooden plugs inserted to stretch the lobes to near shoulder length. The duties of the boys relate in one way or another to the care of their herd of livestock and moving them to new grazing areas or water holes. Unlike his older warrior brother, the boy may not carry any weapons of war or wear ornaments in his ears or on his arms. He may carry a stick to prod the livestock, but nothing else. He must keep his head clean shaven and only wear a simple cloth wrapped around his body. He may play with boys of his age group, but under no conditions are boys allowed to hold meetings or discuss issues decided by elders or warriors. He is also not allowed to speak to warriors or elders unless they permit it. In general, uncircumcised males are overworked, and ridiculed by most everyone. Like most children in the world, and for better reason, they look forward to the next stage of their lives.

SOCIAL CONTROLS

Positions of Authority

The Maasai do not have a well-defined governing system involving explicit laws and sanctions against law violators. Nor do they have people in positions of authority like police and judges to prevent crime and execute punishment. Their system of government comes closest to what we would define as anarchy. In other words, there really isn't any kind of formal government, and there doesn't seem to be much need for one at this stage of their development. In a society of small communities their tendency to consider violating taboos is restrained by the close personal relationship they have with others in their village. The motivation for crimes like stealing are considerably curtailed when the only people they have to steal from are friends and relatives. They are also familiar with one another's possessions so there would be little opportunity to use what might be stolen. Consequently, being caught is almost inevitable. In addition to this, there is the informal punishment of gossip and ridicule which is a far worse punishment than fines or confinement in a prison. There are some tribes like the Kikuyu that do sometimes steal from one another in spite of these usually effective controls. However, the Kikuyu lack the strong pride of the Maasai who are taught from childhood to respect the property of others and follow Maasai traditions.

In their patriarchal society the few male leaders they have are the men selected during the four age-grades. They function mostly as a kind of chairman of discussion sessions. Their influence on decisions is dependent primarily on their personality rather than their position. The medicine man is the only leader that has respect and authority because of his position. He is consulted on all major decisions and his recommendations are almost always followed. His decisions have mostly to do with predicting the future and recommending the time and place to hold important ceremonies.

The authority system involving Maasai women is even less complicated since they don't have age-grades or leadership positions. In their patriarchal society they are obligated to follow the dictates of their fathers and brothers and later their husbands. If their husbands have older wives, they are also subservient to them.

Serious Norm Violations

Most violations of Maasai customs are minor and any punishment is enforced informally by the offended person or his relatives. The most frequent violation usually involves the warriors stealing livestock for a quick meal, and the punishment is seldom any more serious than the obligation to equal compensation. However, more serious violations are usually strictly enforced and punishment is the concern of the entire community. Livestock theft, particularly of cattle, by anyone other than warriors is considered a serious offense. The Maasai put their own personal brand mark on almost all of their possessions. However, livestock stolen for immediate consumption have all evidence of ownership completely eliminated. The usual punishment for getting caught butchering or eating another person's livestock is the payment of a fine of five of that same animal, and each person involved in the theft must pay the same fine. If the person involved can't pay the fine, it is considered the obligation of his relatives to make the payment, and they usually comply even though it is strictly voluntary on their part.

Life in most Maasai villages is very harmonious and almost completely absent of crime or conflict. A major reason for the tranquil atmosphere, beyond the fact that they live in small intimate villages, is that they hold all land in common. They don't have the frequent disputes of neighboring tribes whose members claim exclusive rights to the always limited water and grazing areas. Any trading done by the Maasai is through the long process of bartering, which seems most likely to leave the parties involved satisfied or too embarrassed to complain and thereby admit that they were out-bartered. The concept of loans and credit is almost completely foreign to the Maasai and that eliminates an important source of potential conflict.

The Maasai seem to consider incest as the most serious crime. Sexual relations between brothers and sisters is infrequent; probably in part because of the easy availability of other sexual partners. Almost without exception, incest is initiated by warriors or elders. Unlike other violations of their traditions the punishment of the offender is not so predictable, and usually results in a strong emotional reaction. The offender is frequently beaten, his home and kraal destroyed, and much of his livestock slaughtered. Sexual acts like rape, sodomy, and abortion are seldom punished.

Murder is also regarded as a serious offense, but the punishment is mostly routine with surprisingly little apparent emotional involvement. The killing of a person is only considered murder if the person killed is Maasai. The initial response to the murder is for the dead person's relatives and friends to avenge the death. However, the murderer has usually been well hidden by his own relatives and can't be found. The relatives of the murdered person, as a second alternative, demand a fine in livestock which must be paid by the offender's relatives. If the person murdered was a man, the number of livestock (usually cattle) collected is expected to end in the number nine. The fine could be almost any amount, but averages about forty-nine cattle. The number nine has special significance to Maasai males and taken from the number of areas of the body where the inner and outer tissues meet (what Sigmund Freud called the erogenous zones). For Maasai women the number eight has special significance, and that number is reflected in many female possessions and activities. Fines involving the murder of a woman require the payment of livestock in a number ending in eight. The livestock paid in the fine are usually sheep and goats which are also

associated with women. The animals are expected to be of the highest quality. In most instances if the fine for killing is not paid immediately, the livestock demanded will be taken in a raid conducted by the murdered person's relatives.

The murder of children is treated in the same way as the murder of women. The killing of women or children is so taboo that when it occurs it is assumed to be accidental, so the fine is not very severe. In the case of the serious injury of another Massai, a fine in livestock must also be paid. The person responsible for the injury usually pays the fine immediately because the injured person might die, making the fine much higher. They don't make much of a distinction between deliberate and accidental or negligent killing, or responsibility for the serious injury of a fellow Maasai. Whether dead or disabled, they feel that the victim has lost the value of life and compensation must be made.

DEALING WITH THE UNKNOWN

Maasai Medicine Men

Maasai medicine men are more prophets, and religious and political leaders than they are healers. When they are consulted it is most often for advice on when and where to hold ceremonies. It is assumed that their decisions will assure success of the event. The medicine men usually use one of four different techniques as a basis for their decisions. They may base them on their interpretation of their dreams, or on the visions experienced after getting intoxicated on beer and honey wine. They also examine the intestines of a goat which is thought to have prophetic qualities. The most traditional method involves the interpretation of pebbles tossed from the horn of a bullock or water buffalo. The medicine men are the most respected leaders of the Maasai people. The position is passed from father to eldest son, or the closest male relative if he doesn't have a son.

Treatment of Illness and Injury

Despite the absence of a knowledge of medical science the Maasai have learned, mostly through trial and error, that certain procedures are effective in treating illness. Most remedies are dietary and involve eating or abstaining from certain kinds of food. They consume a lot of herbs and plant roots which are thought to have certain medicinal qualities for preventing as well as correcting illness. The women prepare the herbs.

Major surgery is usually performed by a member of the community that developed his skills operating on livestock. The surgery is crude and frequently fatal. For example, in the case of a stomach wound they simply push the intestines back into the stomach cavity along with at least a quart of sheep fat and sew up the wound. If it should be a chest wound, the broken ribs are replaced with those from a sheep. Once again a generous amount of sheep fat is covered over the wound and it is stitched closed. The Maasai regard sheep fat as a kind of miracle substance in the treatment of illness and injury. It is used in almost all preventive as well as corrective treatments, much as the European cultures have used penicillin. Other parts of the sheep are also used: the hide and intestines are sometimes used to

close wounds, and bone parts used to "splice" together serious fractures. If the wound is considered too serious to be corrected by surgery, the wounded person is killed by a close friend to avoid a slow and painful death.

Death

The Maasai have a high mortality rate. The death of friends and relatives is a common occurrence so they learn early in life to accept death as an intrinsic part of the routine of living. In spite of this, they never seem to worry or even think about dying. They also express little concern about the many dangers they face every day that could bring a sudden end to their lives. They have, through necessity, learned to accept the threat of

dying without the anxiety most Europeans seem to experience.

The Maasai have little fear of dying, but they have a strong fear of the dead and anything associated with the deceased. This fear is reflected in many of their customs, such as their taboo against mentioning the name of the dead, and their refusal to use any personal possessions of anyone that has died. When a member of their community dies they usually move to a different location and construct a new village. They often leave the body of the deceased behind in the village vacated to be removed by the member of another tribe. It isn't difficult to find someone to accept the unpleasant chore because they are usually well rewarded in Maasai livestock.

The high mortality rate of the Maasai is due in large part to their lack of knowledge of the technology of modern medical science. As previously mentioned, their surgery and corrective techniques are extremely crude. All too often their preventive treatment relies too much on an inadequate diet composed mostly of herbs and animal fat. Many preventive techniques are essentially psychological and involve things like paying debts, or slaughtering a prized bullock outside of their village and leaving it to be eaten by wild animals.

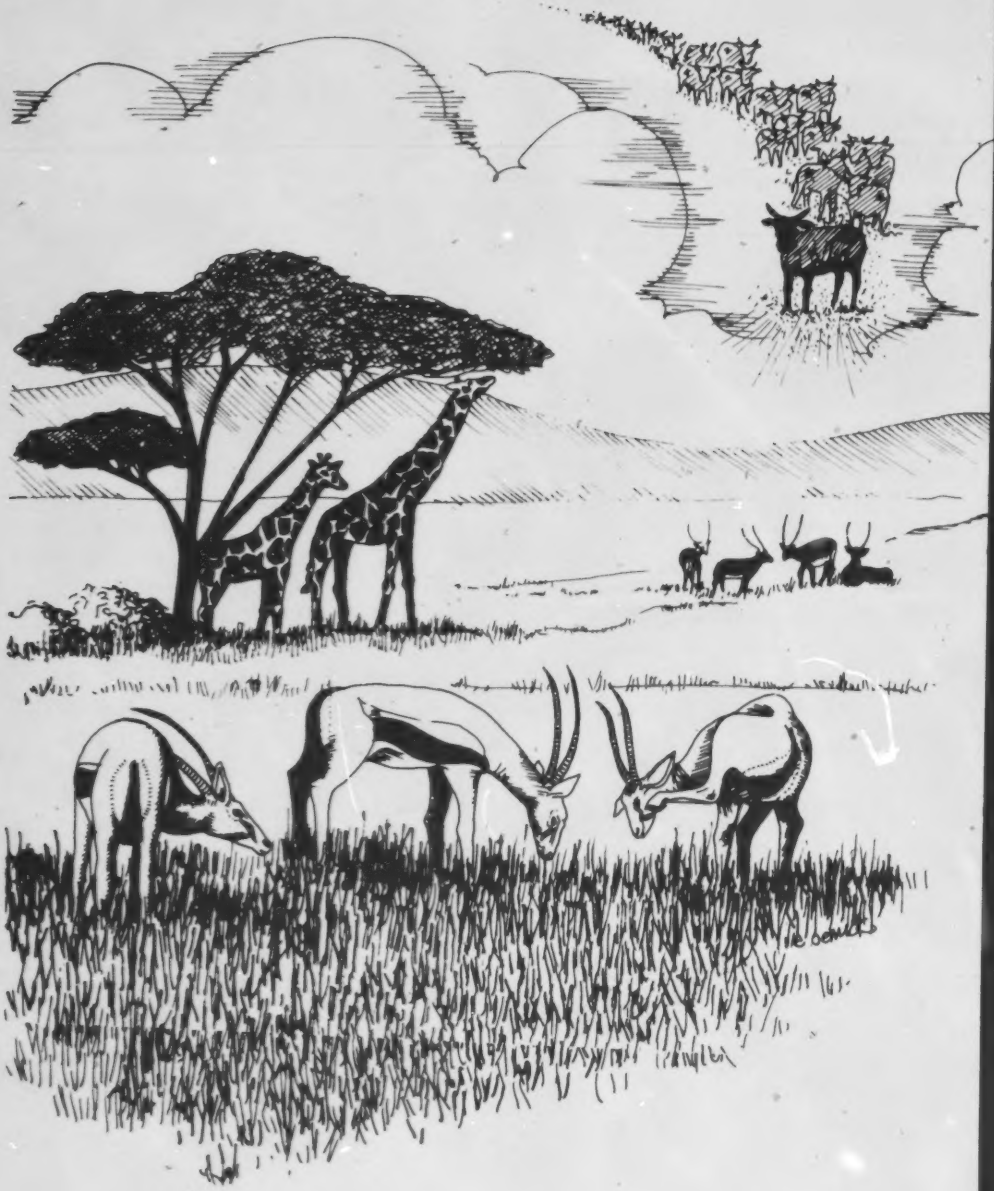
When someone is seriously ill or injured and assumed about to die, he is taken outside of the village and left to die alone. The one exception is the very old who are often allowed to die in their huts. The old are also sometimes left behind when the Maasai migrate to a new area in order not to impede their movement. The dead or dying are taken outside of the thornbush fence that surrounds the village in the direction that the sun sets. The body is placed in the open with the left side touching the ground and the face pointed toward the east. The left hand is placed under the head and the right hand over the chest. They are left in this position to be consumed by predators, usually hyenas and vultures. The Maasai do not bury their dead. They believe that digging injures the earth and the important grass it provides. As a livestock economy, they are totally dependent on the grass which is the only food available for their animals. Their protective attidude toward preserving the grasslands also explains why they regard farming and farmers with such contempt.

There is seldom any evidence remaining of the body of the deceased by the following morning. In rare instances the body is not consumed or removed by predators the first night. When that happens it is assumed that the deceased must have violated serious taboos during his lifetime. In order to make amends for the deceased and to assure themselves that the body will be consumed the second night, a small feast is held. A ram from the herd of the deceased is served to a few of his closest friends. Most of the fat from the ram is used to cover the body to attract any wild predators in the area.

The fear that the Maasai have of the dead is also reflected in the general lack of any mourning ceremony. This even includes a taboo against showing grief in the presence of other people. As with most things, there are occasional exceptions to the rule. In their strong partiarchal society the few exceptions are predictably limited to the elders who are considered unique in at least one of three ways. Either he was a popular leader of his age group, a medicine man renowned for the accuracy of his predictions, or a man who was wealthy in sons, cattle, and wives. Even in this instance there is little or no mourning involved. The uniqueness of their special treatment is that they are buried. The body is buried in a shallow grave which is covered with rocks to prevent it from being dug up by predatory animals. These burial sites are well known to the Maasai people and when they pass one they toss a rock on the grave as a sign of respect. Some of these once prestigious elders are considered the exception to another custom. The Maasai reject any concept of a life after death. However, some of these elders, especially those who were medicine men, are thought to be reincarnated as black snakes. As might be expected, it is taboo for the Maasai to kill these snakes.

Stories of Maasai Origins

The Maasai have a number of favorite stories to explain the origin of many of their customs and beliefs. The stories frequently involve myths and supernatural forces rather than historical legends. Maasai elders assume the greatest responsibility in transmitting this part of their culture and they spend a considerable portion of their time entertaining the warriors and children telling these stories. The favorite and most often told story explains the origin of their cattle economy. The young people are told that when



the world was created the earth and the sky were combined together in one solid mass. The earth and sky were separated by their god Enkai who was angered because a member of the Dorabo tribe shot an arrow at the sky. After the separation was made Enkai led the cattle out of the sky and gave them exclusively to the Maasai. This story supports their belief that all of the cattle in the world belong to them. One consequence of this myth is the contempt the Maasai hold for members of the Dorabo tribe.

The reason the Maasai became herders of cattle is explained by one of their stories. They are told that an important medicine man was dying and called his two sons to his bedside and asked them what they would like to have. The elder son was very selfish and asked his father for some of all things that existed in the world. The youngest son only asked for the lion mane his father used to cool himself and keep the flies away. The father was most impressed by the request of his youngest son because he wasn't greedy and wanted something personal from his father. As a result, the older son and his descendents started tribes that follow economic activities like agriculture, hunting or work as a blacksmith. The youngest son and his descendents adopted a life of herding the cattle given them by their god Enkai. In other words, they became the Maasai.

Typical Superstitions

Many of the Maasai omens and superstitions involve the interpretation of the behavior of wild animals. For example, hearing the call of a particular bird indicates if that day's activities will be successful depending on whether the sound is heard from behind or in front of the person. Spitting and grass also have special symbolic significance. The importance of grass is understandable since it represents the ultimate basis for the support of their entire economy. During periods of long drought when the supply of grass is threatened, the women tie grass to their clothing before praying for rain. In times of war either side may call a truce by having one of their warriors hold up a handful of grass so it can be seen by the enemy. When warriors return from a victorious battle they are sprinkled with milk that has been poured over a handful of grass. They also tie grass to their gourds when moving to a new village, all of these acts are thought to aid in bringing good luck to the Maasai people.

Spitting also has a variety of symbolic meanings. They tend to react to any unusual situation which is not part of the predictable daily routine by spitting. For example, they spit when they see a falling star or enter a new dwelling. They seem to regard anything unusual as threatening and spitting is their way of attempting to control a potential disaster. They also spit when they hear bad news or someone mentions the name of a dead person. It is also part of the greeting process when the males meet someone of a younger age group. An elder will usually spit in his hand before grasping the hand of a warrior. They also spit on babies and children when they greet them. In this instance they also make remarks about how bad the child is. They believe that if you compliment a child it will develop an illness. Medicine men sometimes spit on people who are sick as part of the healing process. Spitting may also reflect contempt. A warrior may approach an enemy and spit in his face before verbally insulting him; this is thought to eventually result in blindness.

Popular Maasai Proverbs

Proverbs are a major part of the Maasai belief system. To some extent they seem to be a replacement for their lack of a well-defined religious system, to explain the unknown and establish moral guidelines for their daily social relationships. Proverbs are an essential part of Maasai conversation and they frequently begin and end a conversation with an appropriate proverb. Much of the time the elders and their wives spend with their children and grandchildren is used to teach them an understanding and appreciation of the proverbs.

Many Maasai proverbs are strikingly similar to those of the European cultures, but this does not mean that they were acquired from the Europeans. Most Maasai proverbs were an integral part of their culture long before they ever came into contact with the Europeans. The following is a very limited example of some of the favorite Maasai proverbs.

The elder with a good wife is as fortunate as he who has many cattle.
It is rare to find a gray head who is unwise.
The best of advisors is the one who says what you would say.
Don't beat a man before you talk to him.
Don't revenge one wrong with another wrong.

They who are going the same way, do not delay each other.
Cursed is the man who has no property of his own.
Don't use a spear to separate your cattle.
Two relationships never cease, that of brothers and that of one's age-grade.
No person settles anywhere forever; it is only the mountain which does not move.
Cursed is the son who rejects his father's instructions.
All wisdom cannot be contained in one head.
An old man lives to become a child again.
Respect will safeguard your cattle.
An elephant beaten by too many people will not survive.
Two beggars cannot live well together.
Land is better than money.
A gourd with a hole in the bottom can't be filled.
Defeats are very similar to death.
Don't speak words as if they were only grasses.
An elder's son may be coward, but he is still his son.
Foolishness first, then comes wisdom.
If you demand more than your share, you will end up with nothing.
Don't try to fight a lion with a stick.
Two types of men will always hate one another; he who has and he who has not.
Blessed is the man who has friends.
Truth can split a mountain.
Containers which are full cannot be mixed together.
Man begins by being foolish, and he becomes wise through experience.
It is much better to be poor and live long than to be wealthy and die young.
The brave man cares little about his belly.
Truth is more bitter than lies.

TOWNS IN MAASAILAND

If you look at a map of East Africa, even one that is rather detailed, you are left with the impression that the area inhabited by the Maasai is a sparsely populated desert. There are few names which would indicate the existence of any communities or towns. However, the maps are deceptive. A number of very small towns can be found scattered about throughout the entire area. Most of the maps of Kenya and Tanzania were made by and for people that have no serious interest in the Maasai or their land.

After visiting a number of these small towns you begin to notice a basic similarity between them. The differences between the towns are

quite minor when compared with their similarities. The same thing can even be said about small communities in America, even though it is a more heterogeneous people and culture. Perhaps the most noticeable contrast to America is that the towns in the Maasai territory seem located where you would least expect to find them, and in the most inhospitable terrain. They seem to grow like weeds through asphalt with no noticeable basis for their existence.

Standing in the center of the town, about all that is observable beyond the small community is endless miles of open space. A better perspective can be gained by walking to the highest plateau, which is usually on the periphery of the town. From that position a number of footpaths lead into the community from almost every direction and on most of them are people, and sometimes a few livestock to be sold at one of the local butcher shops. The people seldom travel in large groups but usually alone or in small clusters of two or three. They travel in the early morning and late afternoon in order to be in town during the middle portion of the day. They don't seem to be trying to avoid the midday heat like the Europeans and Indians who retreat to their homes for a lengthy lunch and siesta. The Maasai are active during this period of the day, usually having something to eat in one of the local bars, bartering for merchandise in one of the shops, or sitting on the ground in the sun visiting with friends.

If there is a pond or river near the town, they will usually stop for a moment to refresh themselves. The women sit on a rock at the edge and splash water over their arms and legs. The men usually remove their simple cloth covering and walk out into the water, splashing it over their entire body. They don't use soap and their intent is not to clean themselves, but only to cool and rest their bodies a bit after the long walk. Near the water there are usually a few trees and sometimes a cool breeze, so it becomes a major congregating place for the Maasai and their livestock. The landscape beyond this immediate area consists mostly of small thorn trees, scrub grass, and the rusty-colored rocky soil which is so typical of the territory inhabited by the Maasai. The rusty-colored soil is most noticeable because it is the color of most everything associated with the Maasai people. With the slightest breeze it floats through the air like a mist, adding an unmeasurable coating to the body. By the end of the day it is both measurable and visible covering your clothing like a light coat of paint, and you

can hardly run your hand through your hair.

You look down on the small town, which blends in with the landscape. Like the thorn bushes and scrub grass, the buildings in the town did not develop according to any kind of plan. They are scattered about as if they were thrown there like a toss of the dice. They face in every direction and on different levels of the hilly terrain. The buildings were probably built where the people tended to congregate, just as the few roads grew out of what were formerly footpaths. Sometimes a narrow asphalt road leads in the direction of Nairobi. If the road leads in any other direction, usually toward a Maasai dwelling, there is that inevitable sign "Bitumen Ends." Along the Nairobi road there is frequently a single power line leading to the petro station, the headquarters of the local district commissioner, and sometimes even a few of the stores.

On the periphery of the town there are a number of homes scattered about, usually inhabited by those people who are in some way directly dependent on the town for their survival. Some are small stone structures, but most are similar to the Maasai dwellings which are constructed of twigs and mud. They are usually small circular huts with thatched cone-shaped roofs. Surrounding the home is a vegetable garden, and a thorn bush stockade for their livestock, which are confined there at night. During the day the livestock are taken out to graze on public land, usually by the youngest male child in the family that can assume that responsibility. In spite of the similarities to the Maasai way of life the whole community is foreign to them. The evidence of farming is enough to show that it is not Maasai territory. The small farms, like the stores, are owned by other tribes, usually the Kikuyu. The Maasai deal with them and buy some of their products, but they consider them as inferiors. They actually buy very little in terms of variety; usually maize, a few vegetables, tea, sugar, tobacco, yardage material, cooking pots. Their spears, cowbells and swords are made by the local blacksmith. To the Maasai, town is mostly a place for visiting with friends and relatives from distant villages. Many arrive with the sunrise and sit talking in small groups facing the slowly rising sun. They frequently have a small fire from brush and twigs they have collected and it provides just the touch of heat needed to offset the chill of the morning. Maasai women are seldom in town early in the morning. The women and children spend the night in the closest enkang and arrive in town about mid-morning.

Every day there will always be some Maasai in town, but they prefer market days which are usually on Tuesday and Saturday. On those days the wives of the Kikuyu farmers bring their surplus produce and in an open area near the center of the community lay it out in small piles on the ground. They sit there in the hot sun throughout most of the day to sell their small supply of vegetables, fruit or grain products. The Kikuyu women constantly visit with one another, and the visiting seems to be as important a part of market day as the buying and selling of their produce.

The Maasai are seldom found in the market area since fruit and vegetables make up only a minor part of their diet, and they don't socialize with the Kikuyu. The Maasai sometimes walk through the market area, but they are attracted by the activity more than the products for sale. In some of the towns the market includes a place where Maasai artifacts are sold. They were apparently established for the occasional tourist who passes through the area, but most of their customers are Maasai. Most just come to look, but some buy as well as sell. Since there are so few tourists it would not seem to be a profitable business; however, they have discovered that the

tourist will pay high prices for the things they can get very cheaply. Consequently, with their few sales they make a larger profit than the other market sellers who deal just with local people. In spite of the larger potential profits, it is a risky business. Many Maasai object to the selling of their artifacts. Like the cattle, they feel that these things belong to them even though they are owned by someone else. Even today warriors raid these "shops" usually killing the owner and taking all the Maasai artifacts.

When the women come to town they carry their ever present beaded gourds containing the cattle blood and milk mixture. The men carry only their warrior clubs and sticks; if they eat, they buy their meal at one of the bar-hotel places. These establishments always seem to serve the same type of meal which consists of a combination of corn, potatoes, carrots, and fatty beef chunks heaped on a tin plate. It is served with a native bread which is like a large thick tortilla; actually it is more similar to the Navajo Indian fry bread. Eating is very much a social occasion among the Maasai men: they sometimes share their food and drinks, and there is plenty of conversation, but only with other Maasai.

The permanent buildings in the town are usually concrete structures about a third of a block long and about eighteen feet in depth. This rectangular structure is divided into very narrow shops which are cluttered with merchandise from the floor to the ceiling. The stores haven't much depth because part of the rear area is used for storage, working, and in some cases, living quarters. They frequently use the area behind their shops for preparing what they sell, noticeably around the butchery shops and the bar-hotels. Early in the morning the livestock, usually cattle or sometimes goats, are slaughtered and cut up behind the butchery shop. The back of one of these shops is easily recognizable because of the horns and bones scattered about. The bar-hotels are also easily recognizable from the rear. There is a scorched patch of earth covered with ashes as evidence of frequent fires, and a large metal trough leaning against the back wall. This is where a couple of days each week they cook the grain used in making the inexpensive home-brewed beer preferred by the natives.

Some of the stores have small glass windows, which are frequently cracked or broken and covered by iron bars. In front of the stores there is a narrow slab of concrete to reduce the amount of mud tracked into the store during the rainy season. The store entrance is covered by heavy wooden doors that are bolted and secured with a padlock when the shop closes for the night.

The towns are small so the volume of business is very light. Consequently, the shop owners spend much of their time sitting behind their crudely built wooden counters staring at the activity in the dusty street. Like his customers, the owner spends much of the day visiting with friends who drop by his shop. Over his shoulder is that inevitable picture of the President of the country; the reminder hardly seems necessary since the same picture is on every piece of money he handles.

Most of the stores sell a variety of merchandise. There are some canned and bottled products, but they are expensive and strange to local diet so they tend to acquire a heavy layer of dust. The Maasai as well as the Kikuyu most often buy yardage materials, blankets, tobacco, soft drinks, and household utensils. Most Maasai have little concept of a money economy, so they often come to town with a goat or cow to barter for the merchandise they want.

Any town larger than "a wide place in the road" usually has a few specialized stores. One of the most popular, but least prosperous are the Bata shoe stores which can be found even in very remote towns. It is a Kenyan product, and they push it to encourage the people to buy national rather than foreign products. There is also the intent on the part of the government to get the natives to look more "civilized," a concept they tend to associate with European attire and technology. However, you seldom see anyone in these stores or Maasai wearing Bata shoes. They are expensive and not at all practical for people who live in rural areas. The Maasai as well as the Kikuyu usually do not wear shoes, and if they do they get them from the used clothing market or make them themselves from livestock hide or discarded automobile tires.

The only other really specialized shops are the butcheries. Even the most remote town will have two or three butcher shops. They are almost always the smallest stores in town: very narrow and with so little depth that the customers must stand outside. The animals are slaughtered in the area behind the store and hung on a rack for removing the hide and cutting the meat into sections small enough to be carried into the back of the shop to butcher. The hide is pegged out on the ground or hung on a rack to dry. The meat eventually ends up in the front of the store hanging over the counter. It is not processed like our meat so things like the intestines are sold as they are removed from the animal. In other words, they do not have hamburger, lunch meat, or hot dogs. The meat is also cut differently

so it is sometimes difficult to recognize the part of the animal. It hangs there dripping blood on the stained wooden counter. The owner stands behind the counter occasionally wiping his hands on a soiled cloth across the counter to remove the blood. He seldom seems to discourage the many flies that swarm around him and the meat. There is no refrigeration so a successful butcher must be able to accurately predict his daily sales. Frequently there is a fire outside of the back of the store for those who want to cook and eat the meat there.

The most numerous permanent stores are the bar-hotels and they vary considerably depending primarily on the size of the town. The most primitive are low ceilinged, thatched roofed huts about ten feet wide and eighteen feet long. Near the entrance they have a counter stacked with a few packages of cigarettes and dusty bottles of beer and soft drinks. Behind the counter or off to the side will be a piece of cloth thrown over a rope which contains a couple of cots and represents the hotel part of the bar. However, most of the bar-hotels are permanent concrete structures, frequently two-stories. Almost without exception a two-story building in the town will be a bar-hotel. The hotel portion seldom involves more than a couple of small rooms with a couple of cots, although more cots are brought if there are additional guests. There is seldom anything else in the room except an occasional bit of graffiti on the wall in Swahili. The cots usually have an iron frame with a well-worn, dirty, stained mattress stretched over a few slats of wood or metal springs. The management usually provides a stained pillow without a pillowcase, but seldom includes sheets. The only covering is a woolen blanket, also dirty and stained, but folded neatly at the end of the bed. The bar part of the building is usually a fairly large rectangular room with murals on the wall of scenes usually not native to Africa. The murals are very crude, as if done by a child with a photo concept of art. Immediately to the left of the door as you enter is a five-foot square, wooden movable barricade with posters advertising Tusker beer and Guinness Stout. The function of the barricade is to provide some degree of privacy for the patrons. Beyond the barricade are four or five rectangular crude wooden tables, and an assortment of unmatched chairs and benches scattered about on the concrete floor. Beyond the conversation, the most noticeable sound is made by the tables and chairs adjusting to the weight of the patrons on the uneven floor. In one corner is a small bar, completely enclosed in a metal fencing from floor to ceiling. The barkeeper sits inside

of this caged area and serves the drinks through a small window in the iron network. The drinks served are bottled beers, soft drinks, and the native beer. The taste of the native beer explains why the bartender serves it from an iron cage.

The native beer is a mixture of about two-thirds ground maize and one-third wheat product. For three days the ingredients are soaked separately in barrels of water which they absorb during that time. After three days the grains are cooked separately in metal troughs over a hot wood fire, and then laid out separately on burlap bags on the ground to complete the drying process. The grains attract flies, ants, and other insects which are difficult to avoid and inevitably become part of the brew. Chickens scratch around in the grain and eat their fill, and no attempt is made to chase

them away. After a day in the sun the maize and wheat are mixed together and placed in barrels and allowed to ferment for three days. The mixture is then strained and ready to drink. The brew is served in large tin soup bowls at a price that even the very poor can afford.

There are never any women in the bars, and few men before early afternoon. As the afternoon progresses the bars begin to fill. Most of the patrons are Kikuyu, and a few Maasai elders. The bottled beers and soft drinks sit on the shelves collecting dust, because very few of the patrons can afford anything but the home brew. If it hasn't been strained very well, it looks like a kind of watered-down oatmeal. If it has been well strained, it looks like coffee with cream. In either case it always seems to taste a bit like cold coffee.

The major technological influence of European culture on these small towns is the local petrol station which provides the energy for the constant influx from the outside world. Most of the towns don't have a petrol station, but there are enough of them to enable vehicles to reach even the most isolated villages. The vehicles will eventually drive away to Nairobi, after depositing their canned foods, textiles and bottled drinks. The Maasai usually ignore these foreign influences, including the government posters that say they should wear pants and send their children to boarding school. They take from these small towns what they want and reject the rest. The women sit in small groups under a tree breastfeeding their infants and talking with friends. The men are constantly moving about through the town, and seem to spend most of their time just greeting and "small talking" with other Maasai. The form of the greeting is determined primarily by their circumcision. Those circumcised, both men and women, clasp hands and it is essential that you touch the hand of everyone you meet. The younger people that have not as yet been circumcised must bow their heads before their elders, who touch them on the top of their heads. Children are seldom found in town since some are starting to attend school, those that do not are herding the cattle and goats, or caring for their younger siblings.

About mid-afternoon most of the Maasai have started the long walk home to their villages. They leave alone or in small groups along the small dusty paths that seem to lead to nowhere. Even the small town seems foreign to them, and they seldom leave with anything more than what they had when they arrived.

TRENDS AND THE FUTURE

The Maasai are one of the few preliterate societies in the world that have been fairly effective in resisting the pressures to bring changes in their culture. Most of the pressure for change is being exerted by the countries of Western civilization. As time passes, the pressures grow stronger and major changes in Maasai culture are inevitable. Considering their exposure to Western cultures, it is surprising that they have been able to retain so much of their traditional way of life. Much of their resistance can be traced to the tremendous pride they have in their culture. Their pride is so strong that most non-Maasai consider it arrogance. Unlike almost every other preliterate society they are unimpressed with the gadgets of Western civilization: guns, canned food, cars, furniture, or transistor radios.

The pressures for change are coming from a variety of directions and are too intense for even the proud Maasai to resist. The culture of Western civilization is increasingly evident and the younger Maasai in particular find it difficult to reject. This is in part the result of an ever-increasing percentage of their children attending school, where they get a great deal of exposure to the outside world. Strangely enough, the strongest pressures for change are from their own government. Most of their government leaders have been educated in Western countries, and have returned to East Africa with the intent of establishing much of the culture they have experienced. They seem to want to show the rest of the world that they are not a stereotyped primitive society. As a result they frequently spend too much of their limited resources on such things as buildings, expensive cars, a national airline, and an elaborate bureaucracy of positions held by high-salaried friends who have no function or value to the people.

The greatest threat to the Maasai culture is a result of the government's policy to appeal to the tourists. They are the major source of income for all of the countries of East Africa, and the number of tourists coming to East Africa increases every year. Maasai livestock compete with the wild animals for survival in a land that is limited in the number of animals it can support. Most of the tourists come to see the wild animals rather than the people, the end result being that the many tribes of East Africa must change their way of life to conform to the demand created by the tourist industry.

The main change being stressed is to get the Massai people to adopt a small ranch concept in their cattle economy. This has already been introduced in some areas and seems to be successful. An alternative would be to form cooperatives based on their traditional family structure. In any case it has been decided that they must give up their traditional nomadic way of life. They must also stress quality rather than quantity in cattle breeding in order to compete in the beef and dairy market. The incorporation of these practices would probably result in the least changes in their culture. As small ranchers, they would not have to engage in farming which they find so objectionable. They could continue to buy grain and vegetable products from neighboring tribes.

The greatest concern is over the adjustment that the children will be required to make. Those in positions of authority seem to agree that most of the children will live in a world radically different from that of their parents. It will be an entirely new way of life that requires skills their parents cannot teach them.

Consequently a number of primary schools are being established in the Maasai territory, sponsored by missionaries and the government. The schools provide an elementary educational program much like that found throughout all of Kenya. The Maasai are spread over a vast geographical area so it is necessary for the schools to provide dormitory facilities for the children who live too far away to commute every day. The facilities are rather crude by European standards. The children are provided with a single iron frame cot in an over-crowded dormitory. Their few possessions are usually kept in a wooden suitcase under their bed. Their meals are simple, but nutritional and include primarily oatmeal, vegetables, rice, potatoes, meat, milk and fresh fruit. The diet, like everything else at the school, is a new experience for Maasai children. The most obvious change, and the thing that makes the greatest impression on the children, is the radical change in their clothing. Like all Kenyan school children, they are required to wear uniforms. This British custom provides an interesting insight into the acculturation process. It does not aid the learning process, and represents an additional expense which most parents can't afford. It is a status symbol that has made a great impression on the Black authorities who administer the school system, even though it was once a symbol of their subservient position.

The whole concept of school is completely foreign to Maasai people. It can't really be described to them, because they have nothing like it in their way of life, including the words necessary to describe what going to school involves. However, some parents have agreed to send their children to school primarily because of a variety of subtle pressures exerted mainly by the government and the missionaries. When the children return to their villages between courses or on religious holidays (Christian) the parents begin to realize that what is called "going to school" is an attempt to get their children to reject the Maasai culture, and adopt European customs.

These assimilation efforts have proved to be very successful with most African tribes, but not with the proud Maasai. The few who start primary school seldom return after the "cultural shock" of their first visit home. There are some who do complete primary school, and are provided with two alternatives if they should choose to continue their education. If they decide to continue an academic program, they must compete with all Kenya

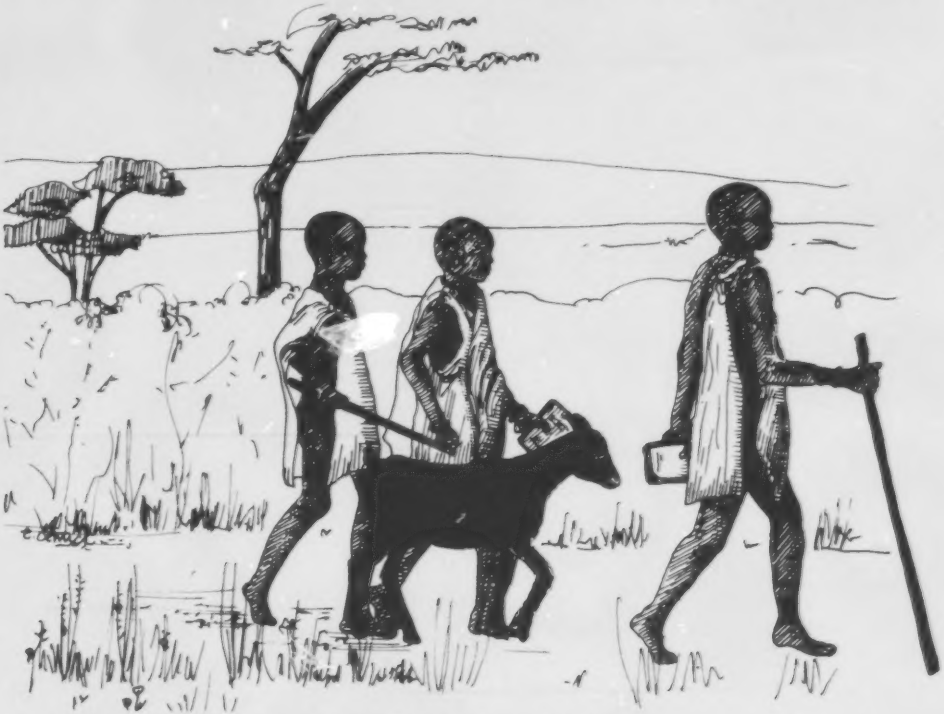
students in a national examination for the limited enrollment in the secondary schools. The few children that complete primary school usually return to their village and Maasai traditions or enroll in the polytechnic program. It teaches them practical skills for survival in a technology they are now pretty well assimilated into after their primary school experience. The polytechnic schools offer instruction in practical skills like masonry, welding, carpentry, and vehicle mechanics.

In addition to academic and vocational education for the children there are also programs oriented toward the specific practical needs of the older Maasai. The adult instruction primarily stresses literacy, understanding a money economy, agriculture, livestock husbandry and ranching methods. Religious instruction is also stressed since most of the training centers are primarily supported and administered by different Christian churches. All of the instruction is voluntary and available at a small fee. Some of the adult instruction is offered in the early evening a couple of evenings a week so that it does not interfere with their work. There are also concentrated programs that last a couple of weeks. The training centers provide boarding facilities for those who choose to attend.

Most of the training centers maintain an experimental ranch and farm to demonstrate the advantages of modern techniques in raising quality livestock and the advantages of small scale farming as a supplement to their livestock economy. The experimental ranches do provide undeniable proof that modern scientific ranching techniques produce livestock far superior to the Maasai herds. However, it doesn't seem to make much of an impression on them because they reject the concept that the quality of livestock is more important than the size of their herd.

The program designed to get them to supplement raising livestock with farming has been even less successful. Vegetables are only a minor part of their diet, and what little they need they can easily get from the Kikuyu and other tribes who are primarily farmers. To the Maasai the thought of breaking the soil and the grass it supports for their cattle is a major violation of their concept of dignified work and their religious beliefs. They continue to consider farming as an occupation of only the most inferior of tribes.

The literacy instruction at the training centers has also been generally ignored by the Maasai. Reading and writing is simply no advantage in their way of life. Part of the failure of the literacy program can be attributed to its close association with instruction in Christianity. Much of the little literature that exists in the Maasai language is translations of the Bible, and they haven't found Christianity at all compatible with their way of life. So much of Christianity is based on the concept of redemption, and that



idea is totally foreign and unacceptable to the Maasai.

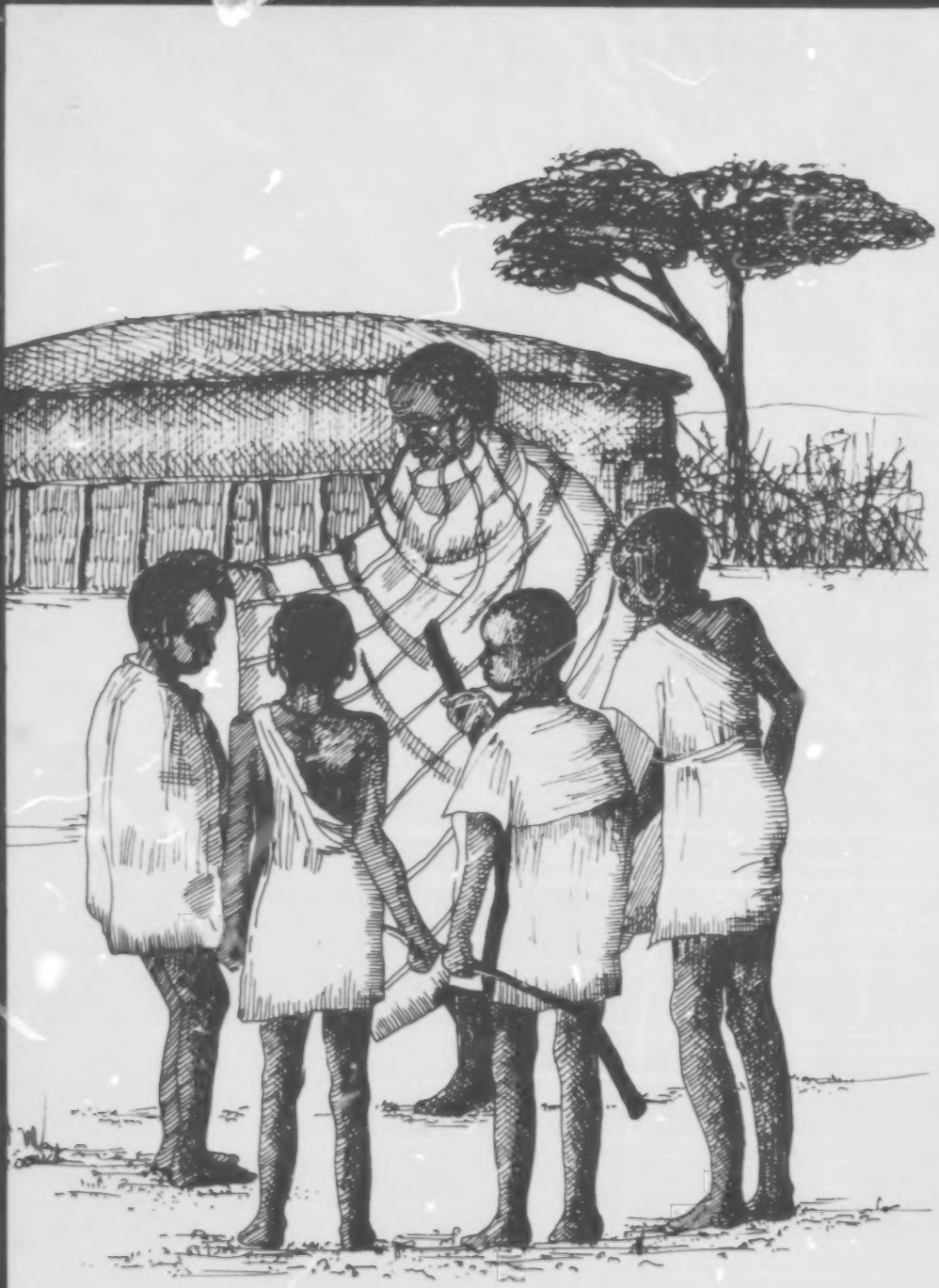
The training centers have been most successful with instructional programs that are compatible with their traditional culture or meet some specific need. Teaching them an understanding of money as a medium of exchange rather than livestock bartering has been useful because they have an increasing need for products available only from the outside world. Tanning livestock hides, and making their unique beadwork jewelry for the

tourist market have been their most sucessful programs. These are accustomed activities, so it was just a matter of making things that appeal to the tourists. It provides employment for some of the people, and enables the training centers to become partially self-supporting.

For understandable reasons the training center programs are oriented toward the young. They, more than their parents, must be equipped to deal with the outside world that they can no longer ignore. The pressures for change are rapidly increasing so there are plans to open many more training centers, and encourage more involvement on the part of the Maasai.

The training centers are a well-organized and deliberate attempt to change the Maasai culture. There are more subtle and voluntary changes occurring as well. The most obvious are in material things. Even in the most remote village you are likely to find a few rusty tin cans, bottle caps, and discarded remains of paper and plastic. Within Maasai living quarters you are also likely to find a few tin and pottery containers in addition to their traditional gourds. Sometimes you will see a book of matches, or a plastic bottle of pills from the recently established health clinics. As a guest, you are not only likely to be served tea, but have it served in a porcelain cup from an aluminum teapot.

The influence of European culture is also noticeable in their clothing. Very little change is evident with the women and children, beyond the substitution of textiles for their traditional clothing made from the hides of the livestock. The warriors and elders have been most receptive to adopting European-styled clothing. In part this is due to a major campaign on the part of the government and the missionaries to get the men to wear something that covers the body more effectively. Most males continue to prefer wearing the traditional short piece of cloth that is knotted over the left shoulder. It exposes most of their body from the left side, or with a slight breeze, from almost any side. It also exposes the only thing they wear underneath the cloth, which is a simi or short sword tied with a small cowhide belt around the waist. Getting the men to wear trousers has become somewhat of a national issue with a variety of pressures exerted on the Maasai including ridicule. At the moment one member of their congress, who is half Maasai, has threatened to resign within the year if they do not start wearing trousers. The threats have not made much of an impression. They aren't at all impressed by the criticism of the tourist and missionaries,



and the concept of a national government is completely foreign to them, especially since it tends to be dominated by the Kikuyu.

There are some changes in their attire, but they are mostly voluntary. Used clothing from the United States and Europe is being sold throughout East Africa and some of it is being adopted by the Maasai warriors and elders. They are very selective and seldom buy anything except coats, hats, and shoes—pretty much in that order of preference. Coats are understandably popular because they provide additional warmth during the cool evenings, and conserve the time and effort required in collecting the wood or dung fuel. Most seem to prefer the light-weight, knee-length raincoats which they usually wear over their traditional cloth if they are warriors, or under the blanket if they are elders. They also seem to like the European hats, and the variety of styles they wear is endless. It is very reminiscent of the initial contact the American Indians had with the European cultures; they dressed in their traditional attire except for a European-styled hat. The Maasai seem to prefer stocking or ski caps, but if you travel among them long enough, you are likely to see almost every type of European headgear. Some of the warriors and elders are even starting to wear some type of footwear, usually sandals with the sole of an old automobile tire. A few men even wear European shoes and in rare instances socks as well, but always with some traditional Maasai jewelry around their ankles.

There is an increasing demand by the tourists for Maasai artifacts, and this has also changed the material aspects of their culture. Many Maasai are selling some of their personal possessions because of their ever-increasing need for shillings. A typical example of this kind of change was reflected in the attire of an old man I met in a very remote village. He was dressed in every way according to Maasai tradition. However, around his neck was a small plastic bottle attached to a piece of cowhide. He had no doubt sold his hand-carved wood and cowhide snuff box to a tourist. Regretfully, he provides an insight into the future of the Maasai people. The initial changes in their material culture are inevitably followed by selling even more of their artifacts for pots and pans, canned food, Kellogg cornflakes, Pepsi Cola, and eventually transistor radios. European culture will continue to spread beyond material things to include ideals, values, and religious beliefs. It marks the beginning of the eventual end of the Maasai way of life.

A FINAL PERSONAL NOTE

My initial contact with the Maasai people left me with mixed feelings. The exposure to a people whose way of life was such a sharp contrast to my own resulted in some degree of culture shock. It was a "double-edged sword" kind of culture shock that required adaption to a very different lifestyle, and adjustment to the loss of many of the creature comforts of modern technology. I was somewhat surprised at my fairly rapid adjustment, which I attribute primarily to the warm hospitality of the Maasai people. They always greet you with a wide smile and an extended hand to clasp in friendship. Regardless of when you arrive in their village, one of the leaders will inevitably invite you into one of his wives' huts for tea. Whether you care for tea or not, you anxiously accept the invitation to escape the swarms of flies. The flies are their constant companions and follow them everywhere they go outside their huts.

You enter the hut by crawling through a low, narrow doorway into almost total darkness. The entrance has a sharp turn to the left where there is just enough light to recognize that you are looking into the faces of calves and baby goats. A few feet beyond that you enter an area with a bit more head room. In the center of the room is a small fire of hot coals confined by a few large stones. The fire is never allowed to get to the blazing level so there is no problem with smoke even though the only ventilation is the entrance and a few small holes in the walls. On both sides of the fire are slightly elevated small compartments built of twigs of wood and covered with cowhide. These compartments are beds and the storage areas for most of their possessions. During the day and early evening they serve as seating arrangements for guests, and your host guides you to a seat while your eyes adjust to the dim light.

The atmosphere is comfortable; the fireplace provides just the right amount of heat and light. Tea is usually served in a porcelain pot and cups, which they bought in the nearest marketplace. These few porcelain utensils are prized articles, but they look quite foreign among their handmade possessions. You are served a generous portion of tea with what appears to be an equally large portion of cream until you later see the muddy water

they used for preparing the tea. You hesitate for a moment, trying to think of an acceptable excuse to refuse the tea: "not thirsty," "allergic to tea," "against my religion"; they wouldn't understand any of these excuses, and would only be deeply offended. You realize you have no choice so you smile at your host and lift the cup to your lips. At that point you notice the flies floating on the surface. Suddenly you are back where you started: trying to avoid drinking the tea. However, it requires an entirely new approach since you have accepted their hospitality. So you find yourself desperately looking around for some place to throw it away. It would quickly soak into the ashes around the fireplace, or even faster into the dust under the bed or the pen of the young livestock which is in easy arm's reach. However, you are a unique experience in their usual daily routine so they are watching every move you make. You are trapped!

You drink the tea trying not to think of the muddy water and flies, and at the same time wondering how you are going to work a case of dysentery into your busy schedule. The dysentery comes, of course, and never at a convenient time, although no time is convenient. You awaken in the middle of the night to a rumbling sound that resembles distant thunder. You suddenly realize that the noise is coming from your stomach

and represents millions of bacteria screaming to be released. You move slowly from your bed trying not to awaken anyone; at a time like this the last thing you want is company. You end up awakening the entire dwelling because there is simply no way you can get out of a bed made of dry twigs without making a lot of noise. You stumble through the narrow passageway that is poorly lighted by the dying embers from the fireplace. Bumping your head and feeling your way along, you see a silhouette of a neighbor's hut framed against the moonlight. As you crawl through the entrance you suddenly feel a cold, wet, muddy mixture oozing through your fingers. Your somewhat panicked mind rapidly pages through its memory bank trying desperately to identify the unpleasant substance. At that moment you suddenly recall that puddle of calf urine, dung, and mud that almost always covers the entrance to a Maasai hut. Once outside, you move off in whatever direction appeals to you at the moment. There isn't any kind of toilet facility, or customs which could be regarded as "toilet etiquette." The only rule is the rule of nature, and they usually acknowledge that "call" regardless of when or where they might be at the moment. Spoiled by the technology of western civilization, you find yourself looking for some "thing" rather than some place. You decide on a rock that you notice a short distance outside of the village. In spite of the uncomfortable seating arrangements, there are moments of pleasure as you feel all of those things you shouldn't have eaten come flowing out of your body. You also can't help experiencing some degree of pleasure from the surroundings. In the moonlight with a gentle cool breeze the landscape seems to acquire qualities of beauty that somehow disappear in the heat of the sun. The thorn bushes and scrub grass silhouetted against the moonlight stimulate your imagination as they appear to take the forms of people and animals. Each breeze carries with it the odor of the Maasai, their livestock, the vegetation, or the unique pleasant aroma of all of these things blended together.

You suddenly become conscious of the sound of wild animals. With a bit of a shock you remember that you are outside of the village and in a highly vulnerable posture. Given your thoughts at that moment it is quite understandable why you go into a state of absolute panic when you hear something moving through the scrub grass nearby. It turns out to be your host who feels he must accompany you even at moments like this when you wish so desperately to be alone. Out of a well-entrenched habit you find yourself reaching for a piece of tissue that isn't there. For a moment you

look toward your host, and then realize that he doesn't bother with things like that. He is living proof that toilet tissue isn't necessary, but after years of conditioning you somehow feel you have to complete the process that has been drummed into you since infancy. You look about and soon realize that there is nothing functional available: just rocks, sandy soil, and thorn bushes. You find yourself searching through your pockets for something: a piece of kleenex, or notes you've taken and no longer need. There is nothing. You remember that morning when you put on your socks that the toes and heel of your left foot were very visible.

Tired, embarrassed, frustrated, and a bit angry at your host, you move toward your hut and the comfort and security of bed. You stumble through the rocks, scrub grass, and the red soil that somehow remains dusty in spite of the evening dew. Suddenly dominating every sound are the cries of your host yelling as loud as his voice permits. It's a mixture of Maasai, English, and panic. For a variety of reasons you decide that you have spent enough of the evening with your host so you increase your pace. He manages to catch you just as you are about to enter your hut. He is carrying that sock you apparently forgot. You accept it with every expression of gratitude you can muster on such an occasion.

You move back into the hut in much the same way you left it; bumping your head and feeling your way through the narrow passageway. As before, you find yourself face to face with the baby calves and goats. They have learned that any sound can result in the gate opening and their being led out to their dinner. Now that you have overcome your initial culture shock, entering a Maasai hut has become a very comforting experience. It's like crawling under an electric blanket on a cold stormy night. It's warm, snug, cozy, and secure. It tends to bring out emotional feelings you haven't experienced since you were a child. You feel totally protected and secure; indeed, you are back in your mother's womb. You lie there staring at the hot coals in the fireplace while your mind indulges itself in pleasant memories.

There is no counterpart in the European cultures for the role that the fireplace plays in the Maasai way of life. Regardless of where you are located in the dwelling it seems to provide equal and adequate light as well as heat. There is almost always tea as well as something to eat cooking or

warming over the hot coals. I even found the fire to be somewhat inspirational. Watching the flames leap about over the hot coals somehow seems to help me organize my thoughts and express them with greater clarity. The fireplace is also the focal point for many Maasai social activities. It never ceased to surprise me to see the number of people the limited space accommodated. Custom dictates that each arriving guest greet everyone present by touching their hands. As each guest leaves, the process is repeated, and always from a standing position. In a room crowded with the tall thin

Maasai, who are constantly entering and leaving, you have a situation that resembles a can of worms. A solid mass of intertwined arms and legs is in constant motion.

The Maasai have a very distinct odor which is due primarily to their unique diet. The odor seems to be entrenched in their body cells. Consequently it can't be removed by "a good scrubbing" as an occasional tourist is inclined to suggest. The odor is quite strong, and in all probability represents a unique sensory experience for anyone coming from one of the

cultures of western civilization. After your initial negative reaction you decide that you can tolerate it since you aren't going to be there forever. As time passes the odor becomes "not so bad," and soon after that "rather pleasant." Eventually it becomes downright addicting, which may be a symptom that you have been there too long and it is time to consider going home.

There is also a specific color which is typically Maasai. Their clothing, almost all of their possessions, and even their skin, are that rust-like color. It is the color of the soil of their land. In a dry climate with an almost constant breeze it seems inevitable that they should acquire the color of the land. Even the cloth occasionally purchased for clothing is usually the same rust color. The air is almost always saturated with the "reddish" dust, and by the end of the day, every part of your body and clothing has been coated with the soil. Their infrequent rains will occasionally bring some relief from the dust. However, you soon realize that one problem has been replaced by another. When the soil is mixed with rain it takes the form of a kind of heavy sticky "concrete." It collects on the sides of your shoes to the point that it looks and feels like you are wearing snowshoes made of iron. It makes walking very far virtually impossible. The Maasai have a simple, effective, and painless solution to the problem created by the mud: they stay in their huts enjoying tea and conversation with their friends, and leave the problem to be solved with the arrival of the morning sun.

Another characteristic of the land that you never quite adjust to is that it is also the home of the wild animals. They are such a chronic part of the landscape that the Maasai seldom pay any attention to them. However, for someone raised with a "zoo perspective" of wild life, it is an experience so impressive that it will probably never be erased from your memory. It's really impossible to describe finding yourself in the center of a herd of a couple hundred elephants. Fright and fascination vascillate as the animals satisfy their curiosity by taking turns moving in for a closer view. The big males are protective as well as curious and nervously flap their huge ears and paw the ground threatening to charge. You sit there in your rented compact, which seems to be shrinking as the elephants slowly graze their way past.

As you travel through the unfenced terrain, you will probably see a greater variety of wild game than you can find in even the best zoo. You see them not in pairs, but in herds that may contain hundreds or even thousands of a particular specie. The Maasai and their livestock have lived in the wild animal area long enough to develop a compatible relationship. They graze peacefully along with the impala, giraffe, elephant, wart hog, gazelle, and a number of other non-predators. However, there are also the predators that collect a heavy toll in lives from the Maasai and their livestock. Any time you walk outside of the thorn bush fence that surrounds their villages you can't help but feel a bit apprehensive. You are aware that many warriors are killed by predators even though they are armed with spears and swords, trained in the skills of close combat, and quite knowledgeable on the behavior of wild animals. Sooner or later you accept the fact that your only defense is to "stop thinking about things like that," and to become a hard-line fatalist, convinced that your "number isn't up." It seems to work, because you soon find yourself walking completely carefree from village to village thinking only of the notes you're taking and what you need to do next. Like the Maasai, you become so accustomed to the wild animals that you are hardly aware that they are around.

I was in precisely this frame of mind one day while walking between Maasai villages. My thoughts didn't extend beyond my notebook as I tried to record a few recent observations while stumbling through the rough terrain. Suddenly all of my thoughts converged on the present. Directly in my path I saw a male giraffe less than fifteen yards away. It gave me a bit of a start because they seldom let you get so close before giving way. They certainly aren't going to give up the opportunity to stand and stare at you, but they prefer doing it from a safer distance. As I quickly looked about, I noticed a female and baby giraffe nearby and realized that they were probably the reason he was standing his ground. The giraffe is such an awkward animal he offers not the slightest threat to your safety, unless of course you confront him in some threatening way. However, for the good of both of our nervous systems I decided to give them plenty of room. I started moving sideways off to my left. My head was jerking back and forth as I attempted to keep an eye on the giraffe, and also make my way through the terrain. Suddenly I did a double take that would have rivaled that of the best of the vaudeville comedians. Out of the corner of my left eye I caught a quick glimpse of what appeared to be a lion. Within a

second both eyes had focused on the object, only to confirm my initial fear. He was lying under a thorn tree not more than twenty-five yards away. After an initial reaction of pure unqualified, total and absolute panic, my mind quickly regained its courage and started functioning again. It is amazing the number and type of thoughts that pass through your mind in a matter of seconds. Some thoughts, like "I wonder what I should have for dinner," seem quite out of place considering the circumstances. (I've since decided that in that emotionally charged atmosphere I may have been "picking up" the lion's thoughts.) Other thoughts, like "maybe if I just talked to him like that couple did in that movie" are pure fantasy. However, for the most part, the mind seems to summon all of its available resources toward a realistic solution to the problem. You remember reading somewhere that a lion is usually accompanied by females who actually do any killing, so you quickly look about for that possible danger. You also remember that a lion is particularly attracted to rapid movement, so you control your normal tendency to run. Taking shelter is out of the question because there isn't any. For miles there is nothing but the dusty rock-infested soil that only supports the stubby clumps of scrub grass and the small tree-shaped plants that are a solid mass of thorns. You back slowly

away hoping that he isn't interested in hunting at the moment, or has his eye set on one of the impala grazing among the giraffe.

The Maasai have an insatiable curiosity. They also have enough courage and arrogance to satisfy their curiosity under conditions that would discourage most people. Perhaps understandably, the warriors are the most aggressive in venting their curiosity. When you meet warriors while traveling through the back country. It isn't at all unusual, after completing the necessary greeting formalities, for them to insist on going through whatever you might be carrying. Once they have done that they will most likely insist on knowing what is in each of your pockets. If you happen to be driving they seem to almost disassemble the vehicle as they search through everything in it. However, they are an exceptionally honest people, so everything is returned after being thoroughly investigated. They don't seem at all interested in owning things like cameras, binoculars, clothing, or any of the other "trinkets" of western technology. The only time they ever expressed an interest in bartering for something I had was when I was carrying some Maasai artifacts I had just purchased from a village I had visited earlier in the day. Their curiosity also extends beyond your possessions to you as a person, and they show no reluctance in asking very personal questions.

If you are traveling by vehicle, any time you leave a Maasai village you will find it packed with people and their flies, wanting a ride. Many, if not most, probably have no idea where you're going. The men carry their clubs and walking sticks and the women their "tote bags." The vehicle soon becomes a solid mass of bodies. Every new passenger is greeted with wide smiles as they squeeze their way into the car, being sure to touch every person's hand in the process. After all attempts at adding one final passenger have failed, you manage to get underway.

Driving is quite often a problem in the areas inhabited by the Maasai. Walking is their only means of transportation, so the condition of the few roads will normally vary from poor to nonexistent. In many cases it is difficult to distinguish the road from the rest of the terrain, and with a good rain it completely disappears. You move slowly through the countryside, using one hand to steer the car and the other to mop the perspiration from your face. Driving demands your full attention, but you find it impossible

to prevent your eyes from constantly shifting to the rearview mirror. You are fascinated by an elder wearing a heavy army overcoat and wool stocking cap pulled down over his ears, without a bead of sweat on his forehead. Most striking are the women, who present you with a completely new concept of beauty. The absence of hair brings out the beauty of their bone structure and provides a perfect background for displaying their elaborate jewelry.

Occasionally everyone will start waving their arms and talking louder than usual which means that someone wants to get out, and usually in the middle of "the closest thing to nowhere" you can imagine. For miles in every direction there is nothing but more miles in every direction. Everyone will usually get out when you stop the car; some to touch hands with the departing passenger and others to "answer nature's call." Regardless of your destination there will always be a few people who want to go a little farther. Since you gave them a ride they seem to hold you responsible to take them exactly where they are going. After finding it impossible to

communicate the idea that you aren't going any farther you finally give up and go about your business. It may be hours before you return to your car, but chances are they will be sitting there patiently waiting for you to take them the rest of the way.

It is seldom anything less than completely delightful to be around Maasai women and children. They always seem to have smiles on their faces, and find amusement in anything beyond the routine of their lives. Since whites rarely visit their villages, my presence alone was enough to have them giggling among themselves. The children come running to you with their heads bowed for you to touch in greeting. The women come from all directions to clasp hands with you; they stand around for a short time talking and laughing with one another and then return to their work. The children usually remain behind and follow you about everywhere you go. Unfortunately, there is one very "sour note": the flies, and the flies and the flies. They are particularly attracted to the women and children, and swarm about their eyes, nose, and mouth in their search for liquid. Although they drove me to the point of insanity, I can't recall a single instance when even the slightest objection was expressed by a Maasai.

The pure pleasure and security you experience in the presence of the women and children tends to erode rather quickly when you are around the Moran or Maasai warriors. Feelings of cowardice seem misplaced because there are legitimate reasons for experiencing some degree of apprehension. The Moran are well armed with the equipment and the skills of warriors and always anxious to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the elders, young girls, and fellow warriors. They also feel a stronger commitment to Maasai customs which encourages them to follow the warrior traditions. They pay little attention to the national government which is controlled by a tribe they don't respect, and is committed to imposing European values on them. Although you can't help but feel intimidated by their weapons and their arrogance, you really have little to fear unless you are a cattle herder from a competitive tribe.

I will always be deeply indebted to the Maasai people. Certainly for their warm hospitality, but also for giving me the opportunity to come to understand and appreciate their way of life and in the process to learn a lot about myself. I'm sure that as time passes my memory will be distorted,

but enhanced in the process. The moments of pleasure will become increasingly pleasurable and irritations like the flies will become "not too bad now that I think of it." Even without memory selectivity and distortions there are things to envy in the Maasai way of life. Those memories also are enhanced with time, particularly after you get your new tax bill, or get caught on the freeway during the rush hour.

For the present at least the Maasai will continue to live as they have for centuries, a proud and stubbornly independent people. Their time is not dictated by a clock, and the things they do are not dependent on some kind of gadget. Their days are not spent in a Don Quixote quest for security, or their lives imprisoned by possessions. They are truly a free people with an absolute minimum of dependence on things and people. Instead of investing their life, they live it.